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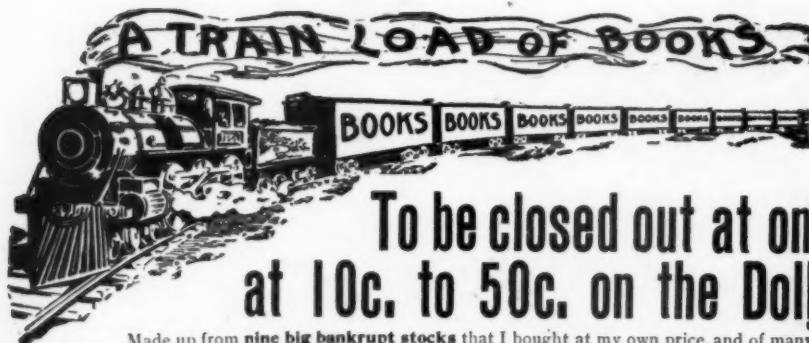


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THE GIRL THAT'S DOWN

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MISS FRANCES STARR
in her big Belasco play as
"Juanita" in "The Rose of the Rancho"





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MISS MARGARET ILLINGTON
with Kyrie Bellew as the wife in the
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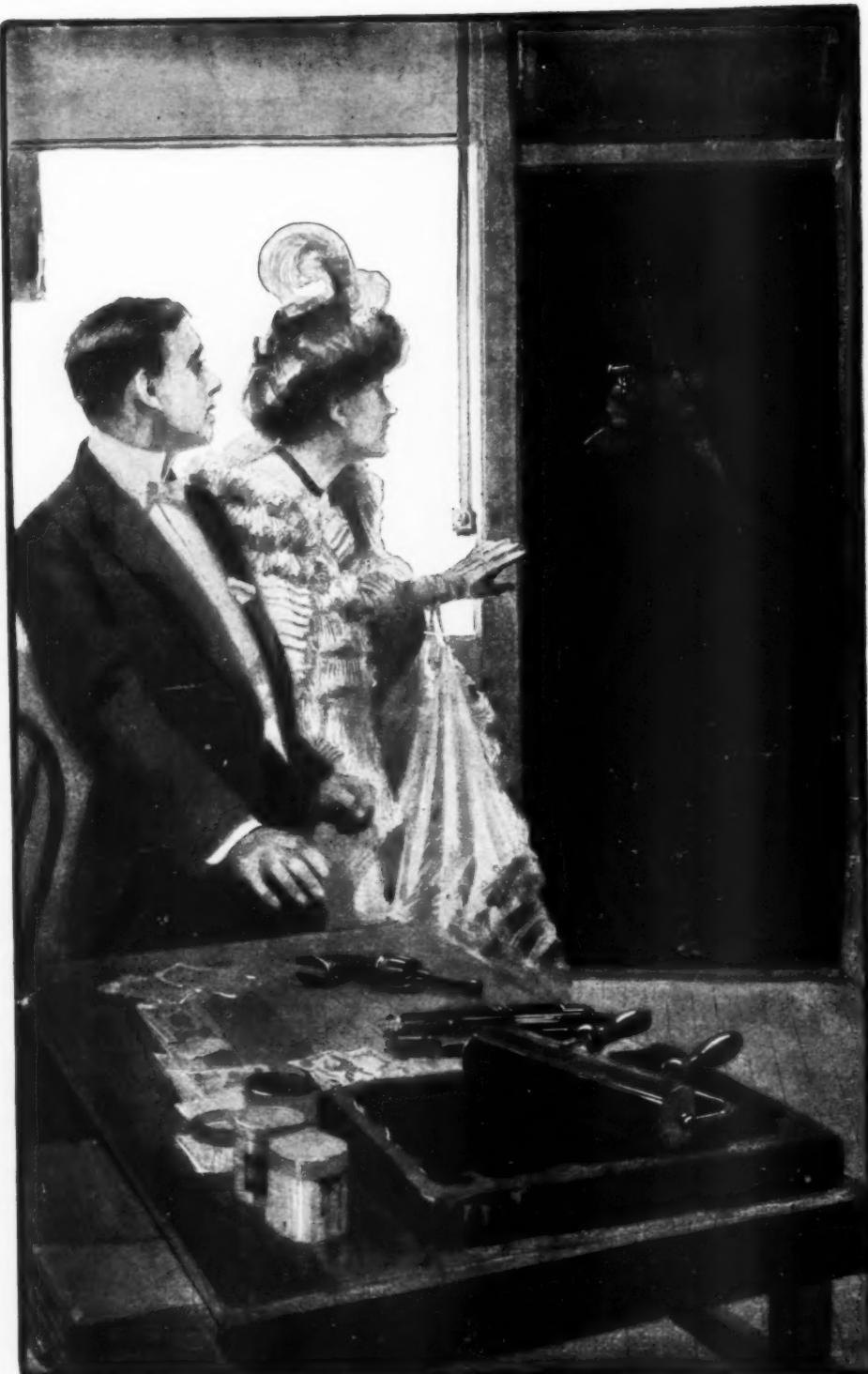




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MISS IRENE ROMAIN





It was a command not to be ignored

"Deep Waters"—Page 92

THE RED BOOK MAGAZINE

Vol. XI

May, 1908

No. 1



The Shock Absorber

BY BAILEY MILLARD

ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN W. NORTON

THANK you, Mr. Belling, I think I can find it myself."

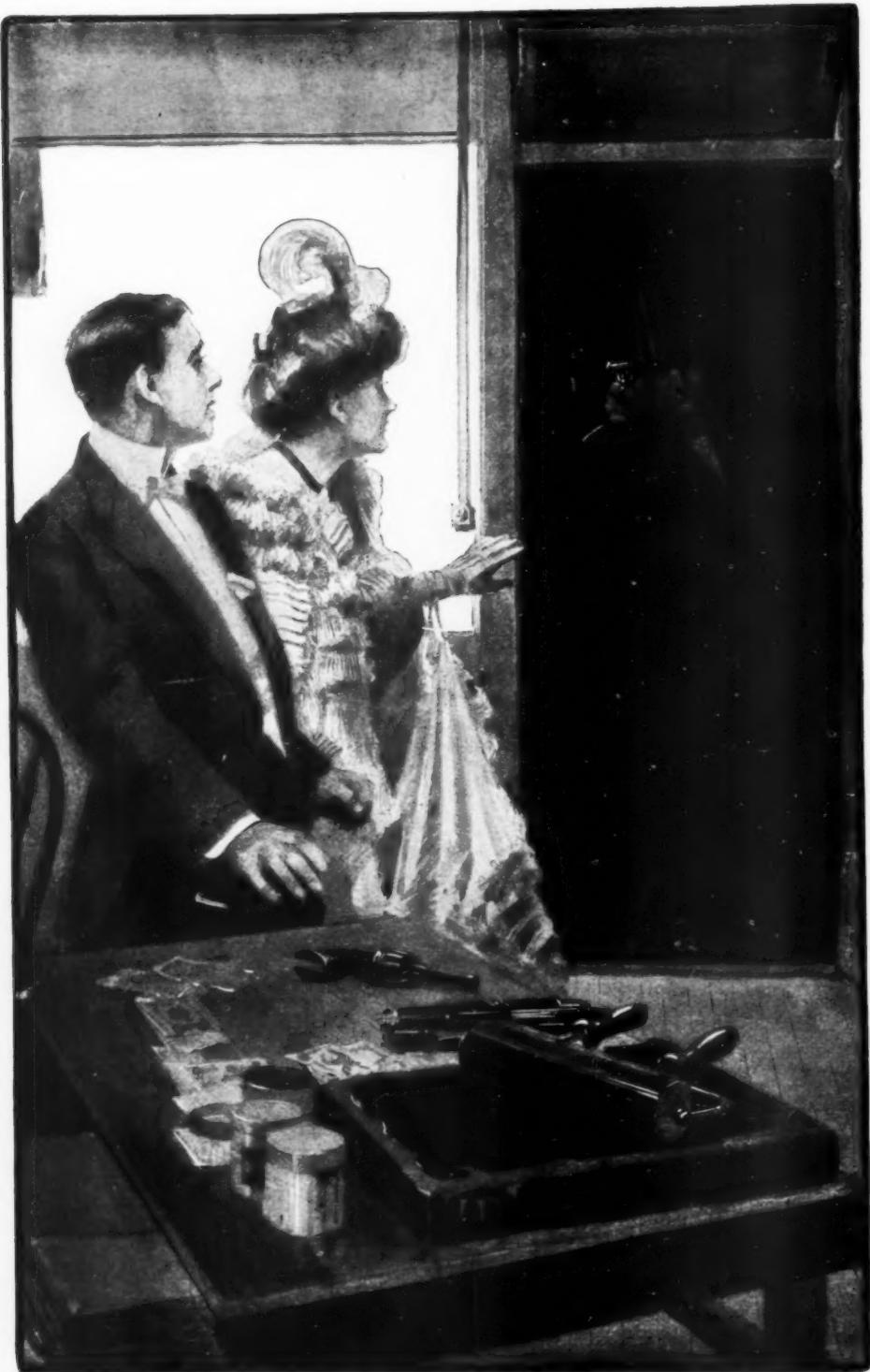
Miss Virna Cool leaned over and poked about in the bottom of the tonneau for the gauntlet she had dropped, the ends of her big chiffon veil hanging almost to the hem of the skirt of her dust-proof ulster as she did so.

"Well, if you won't let me do anything for you," said John Belling, leaning back indolently in his seat beside her, "I'm going to lapse into a state of coma. You don't care for polo-stories and take no interest in yachting-yarns. But, if it pleases your ladyship to be so persistently indifferent to a chap, I suppose there's nothing to do but to listen to the gabble of the *mozos* and watch the mes-

quite spin by. Gad! This isn't much like Broadway on a rainy day, is it?"

Over the hot, arid barrens the big touring-car was speeding along, beating up the gray dust in a great cloud that floated behind it like the smoke of a prairie-fire. The travelers had left their special Pullman on the sidetrack at Las Cruces, just after luncheon, and would probably reach the Sultana *rancho* before dinner.

In the front seat, beside the chauffeur, was Alvin Kitchell, president of the Sultana Company, down on a visit to his Mexican properties. On the middle seat were Miss Cool's maid and two *mozos*, and behind them Miss Cool herself, known as a poor Boston girl, whom the



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great Kitchell, because of her blonde beauty and girlish grace, had been glad to claim as his niece, and upon whom he would probably settle a rich dowry when she would go to the altar with John Belling—a bonding deal for which the old man had been scheming for a year, along with deals on 'change and elsewhere. For to marry money was in Alvin Kitchell's Wall-street philosophy, the first duty of a young woman related to money.

Yes, John Belling had money—heaps of it—and, being the son of the late Steel-King Belling, and never having done a day's work in his life, he knew how to spread it. He had a most expensive taste in steam-yachts and pure Arabian horses. To him, Europe was twenty flashes of turnip-fields, mountains, castles, and boulevards, for he had made that many whirls through it in his autos. Of course, life had come to have but a tepid interest to this pitifully rich young man, and to him a spark of real joy was as rare as a lunar rainbow. He now cared for but one thing in all the world, and that was the heart of the girl who sat beside him in the tonneau of the big car.

But, springing as she did from a family of workers, Virna Cool was temperamentally opposed to the idea which the idle, *blasé* young man represented to her. Beside, there were the stories she had heard. They might not be true, but they set him a long way outside her sympathies. No matter if all the Kitchells and all the people in their set favored the match, she, who knew her own mind, could not harbor the thought of it. What though the whole cry of voices was on the other side, though John Belling had proposed to her at nearly every Eastern watering-place and twice on the Riviera, she could only shake her head. She had settled it perversely in her own mind, that there was "nothing to him but money," and though he seemed to have the common idea of dollarized folk, that "money can buy anything," she had armored herself in the persistent thought that it could never buy her.

"There it is at last," she said, picking up the gauntlet from under the dust-robe. "I thought it had dropped out. Yes, uncle."

Alvin Kitchell was turning his goggles eyes upon her questioningly from under the front of the tan-colored hood.

"Are you all right back there, you two?" he asked. "Beats Egypt for dust, don't it? But the 'Flyer' is a good roadster, all right. Pretty smooth, ain't she, in spite of this awful road? Monahan says it's the continuous torque and the new shock-absorbers that does it, but I don't believe he knows."

He smiled jocularly at the chauffeur, who screwed his visored face to one side in appreciation of the jest.

They flew past a lone adobe, where a peak-hatted native stood like a statue in his bright *serape*, staring at the strange spectacle of the auto, while a mantilla-draped woman crossed herself, seized her squalling *niños*, and ran with them into the hut.

"What a country—what a people!" observed Virna. "How do they manage to live here? Must be perfectly awful!"

"I don't know," drawled Belling. "I wouldn't mind trying it. From what I've seen of the young men down this way, I should say they were happier than the fellows in Fifth Avenue."

"Maybe so; I dare say you're right. But just fancy living here all alone on the desert. It might do for a—for a—"

"For a mood?" he suggested.

"Yes, or for a pose?" she said meaningly.

"You never take me seriously," he complained quietly. "If I said I'd be perfectly happy in an adobe cabin on that lone *mesa* with the woman I love, you'd say—"

"I'd say 'Pose,' with a large 'P,'" she said smiling, "for you couldn't exist six months away from your clubs, and you know it."

"But I don't know it," he insisted, dropping his drawl. "I've been thinking, since we came down here to this great, liberal, open country, that a man might lose his interest in clubs and things—that he might take something out of the heart of the desert and make it his own—fill his life with it. God knows mine's been empty enough."

She looked at him curiously, incredulously, and reflected that this kind of



"It's a good time to put in the rifles now."

man never could know what he wanted, because he wanted for nothing. But his tone seemed serious. She had been going to say "pose" again, but there was that in his air which smothered down the cynical word.

The tall *mozo* leaned forward and said something in his best English to Kitchell.

"Almost to Santy Rosy," her uncle bawled back to Virna. "Hope Clint will be there on time."

Santa Rosa was where Clinton Mabley was to meet them. Mabley was the superintendent of the Sultana *rancho*. Virna breathed a little deeper when she thought of him. She had been wondering why her uncle had let her go on to the ranch instead of leaving her behind in the Pullman with Aunt Kitchell. Perhaps he thought the little flame which Mabley had kindled in her, when he was at Co-

lumbia taking his graduate course, had all died out. Her uncle had disapproved of Mabley, who had been a persistent caller at his New York house while Virna was there. She had suspected that one reason why Mabley had been given the Mexican ranch-station was to place five thousand miles between them. She wondered how Clinton Mabley looked, and what he would say to her for having been so poor a correspondent. She had thought she loved Mabley, but she wasn't sure. There was absolutely nothing against him in her eyes, only that he was just a little wooden.

The auto scooted down a dusty declivity, past cactus and mesquite scrubs, sounding its hoarse honk and awakening Santa Rosa to civilization, gasoline, and smart clothes.

"They seem to think it's a dragon or hippogriff or something," remarked Bell-

ing to Virna, as the car slowed down in the dusty little street and the natives stirred and stared. "Look at that girl!" A young woman in warring colors stood with parted lips as if ready to scream.

"There's Clint," cried Kitchell, pointing to a young man standing on the steps of a *tienda*. "He's got a good coat of tan on."

Virna looked approvingly at the sunburned young man who came out to meet them when they stopped by the *tienda*. Under his broad *sombrero* his features looked as trim and his figure as well set-up as on the avenue two years ago, when they had said "good-by" and she had promised to write.

"Hello, Clint!" called Kitchell. "How's things over at the ranch?"

"How are you, Mr. Kitchell. Everything's all right. How-de-do, Mr. Belling." Mabley strode stiffly toward the car in his old, unbending way. "Ah! Why, it's Miss Cool! This is indeed a pleasure!"

"Didn't you know I was coming?" asked Virna. "Help me out, please, I want to have a look into that shop-window. There's some Indian baskets there."

"Let me go with you," said Belling. "Don't be gone but a minute, Virny," said her uncle. "We start right away."

When Virna reached the rough flags in front of the store, she looked about for Mabley, but he was standing by her uncle, talking low to him about something. Her shoulders gave a little disappointed shrug, and she accepted Belling's ciceronage in a matter-of-fact way, which made him just a bit jealous of the other man. While they were looking in at the window Mabley was saying:

"It's a good time to put in the rifles now. They're all in the *cantina* there."

"Rifles?" Kitchell's eyebrows lifted under his big goggles.

"Yes. You see, the Yaquis have been a little obstreperous lately. They tackled one of our supply-trains last Saturday, killed three men, got away with the whole outfit, and burned the wagons. But I hear they've gone down Campo Seco way, so there isn't much to fear."

"What seems to be the trouble with 'em?" asked Kitchell. "They were quiet enough last year."

"Yes. The *rurales* were pressing them pretty hard then, but Diaz hasn't been sending up any more soldiers, so they're getting a little frisky. It's the old story. The Yaquis aren't savages in the real sense; they come nearer to being white folks than most Mexicans—that is, they are industrious and sober—but they don't like the way the government has been parcelling out their land to Americans. Now, your Sultana concession—they don't like that, because it's right in the heart of the Rio Yaqui country, which they've held so many years. Then, too, we've gathered in nearly all the mesquite

wood for ten miles around, and they don't like that either. They're always apt to be making reprisals like the one last Saturday."

"If you think it's dangerous—" began Kitchell.

"Oh, no—you can get through all right. There, Miss Cool's going into the store, with Belling and the maid. The *mozos* can bring the rifles now."

He motioned toward the open door of the *cantina* and three natives came, each with two rifles.

"Get them in, under the covers," said Mabley. "Here are the cartridge-belts."

He handed one to Kitchell and another to Monahan. The *mozos* in the car took the others.

"Do you really think we ought to try



A Yaqui

it, with Virna along?" asked Kitchell nervously.

It was just because Virna was along that Mabley was so anxious to see the auto standing in front of the Sultana ranch-house. To be perfectly frank, he was discounting the risk in his own mind, for he was sorely tempted. He wanted Virna to be with him at the Sultana, that he might talk to her as he had talked in the Kitchell drawing-room. So he replied:

"Oh, you'll all be safer than you were among those thugs, hold-up men, and second-story fellows back in New York. In your auto you've got the whole state of Sonora to run away in. No Yaqui pony could overtake you. Most of 'em are afoot, anyway."

"All right." Kitchell breathed easier. "Only I didn't just like the idea of exposing her to any danger."

When Belling came back Mabley took him aside from the little group of natives that crowded around the auto and explained to him about the rifles, at the same time handing him a cartridge-belt, which the young millionaire put on abstractedly.

"But, old man," he protested, at last, "is this all right—I mean taking Miss Cool along?"

"Oh, yes," replied Mabley, who saw that if he were to get Virna up to the ranch he would have to deprecate the danger of the trip. "I was just telling Mr. Kitchell it was safer than living among New York's piratical population."

"There's something in that," mused Belling, "only—"

"Toot-too-too-too-toot!" bellowed the siren hoarsely. And they climbed into the tonneau, one on each side of Miss Cool. Puh-puh-puh-puh-puh-puh-prrrrrrrrrr! throbbed the machine, the crowd sprang back excitedly and away flew the big car amid the shouts of the onlookers.

To Belling's disgust, Virna attended so closely to the animated talk that came from her left side, about the Sultana *rancho* and the life there, that he felt depressedly lonesome and left out. These sun-burned men who did things were, after all, he admitted, far more interest-

ing than men who had nothing but money. Why had he not done something? Were the ball-and-chain of his inheritance always to hold him back from true progress?

"I finished up the big irrigation-dam last September," said Mabley to Virna, "and we've got a lot of water in the reservoir already. They told me I'd never be able to build a dam across that *cañon*. It was a pretty tough proposition, but it's there and it holds. It'll never go out. I'll take you up to it when we get to the ranch. I'm awfully proud of it. It's sixty feet high in one place—solid concrete—and three hundred feet across. You ought to see it."

"Yes, indeed—I must see it." Virna was glowing with interest.

Belling's brow gathered a little under the visor of his pongee cap. Was it necessary for a man who did things to blow so hard about the doing of them?

He looked off over the *mesa*, where the heat-lines twirled and the dust-devils whirled, and felt that the girl, whose ulster sleeve touched his Norfolk jacket, was miles and miles away from him. Well, that was the way it had gone with everything he had set his heart upon. What good had his accursed heritage ever been to him? True, friends could not be bought, nor true love, nor anything else that was really worth while. Even this friendly woman, before whom he would have laid down in the dust, could not view him apart from his money. If what he *had* was always to blind her to what he *was*, he could fervently wish himself a poor man—poorer even than Mabley, whose year's salary wouldn't have paid his last month's club-bills. And here he was, hungry for the smiles she was lavishing upon this man who had built a dam and "bossed" some cowboys.

The rhythmic motion of the auto was marred by jogs and bumps as the wheels ran in and out of the ruts and over the stones of the rough stretch of road which led down into the Arroyo Seco and up the Guerrero grade. They passed the water holes at Agua Sagrada, and then whisked along a *cañon*'s side, where great fingers of rock rose heavenward or stretched across their way, apparent barriers

around which they doubled and turned.

"Easy, easy, Monahan!" he heard Kitchell say to the chauffeur. "We don't want to skid off into space, you know."

Going down into a lava pass, where high walls of rock loomed above them, while below the *cañon* yawned, abyss-deep and tragical, the machine whirred with broken rhythm and "bucked" and paused and jerked forward again. Monahan shook his head, brought the car to a standstill, and stopped the engine.

"What's the matter?" asked Kitchell impatiently.

"It's the clutch."

The chauffeur leaped to the ground, wrench in hand, and crawled under the machine in the dust.

"Gad, but this is a hot-box of a place!" complained Kitchell, fanning himself with his cap, and turning in his seat:

"It is that," said Mabley, "but it's cooler over at the Sultana."

"One doesn't feel the heat when in motion," said Virna. "I hope we sha'n't have to stop here long. It's so—"

Ping! A bullet sang over the hood of the car. Phwutt! and another one with grim impact drove through the cylinder-casing.

Virna did not scream, but her pink cheek paled and she turned questioningly to Mabley.

"For Heaven's sake, Monahan, hurry up!" yelled Kitchell, grasping a rifle, and looking toward the rocks whence the firing proceeded.

The chauffeur sprang from under the car, but the moment he rose to his feet he toppled, turned half round, and dropped quietly back into the dust. The maid screamed, and she and the two *mozos* crouched in the bottom of the car.

"Get your rifle, Belling—get your rifle!" screamed Mabley hysterically, his face as gray as the dust on his ulster.

But Belling leaped from the tonneau, and sprang forward into the chauffeur's empty seat.

"Can you handle her?" cried Kitchell.

"I guess so," said he coolly, shoving in the spark-plug. "Whee! Smell that? Tank's leaking."

"Bullet punctured it, no doubt," said

Kitchell, as he raised his rifle and fired toward the ambushed Yaquis. "Hurry her up, can't you?"

But the engine did not take the throw of the switch. Belling leaped to the ground in front of the machine and cranked it violently. The engine did not start. A shot shattered the acetylene lamp at his elbow, but he kept on cranking unconcernedly.

"For God's sake, Belling," groaned Mabley, "can't you start her?"

He made no reply, but twiddled the carburettor and then cranked the machine vigorously, the sweat falling from his hot forehead into the dust.

A whizzing ball ripped through the hood over Kitchell's head. He raised his rifle to reply.

Puh—puh—puh—puh—p-r-r-r-r-r-r! Prrrrrr! came the glad burr of the engine.

Belling sprang to the seat, threw in the low gear, and the clutch, and the car started amid a hail of bullets.

"Get down—get down, Virna!" he called with a quick backward glance. "For Heaven's sake don't sit up that way—don't expose yourself." He threw in his "high," advanced the spark to the limit, and the car dashed down the grade while the bullets whistled about it.

Virna, who had been all eyes for the agile man who had so calmly proved the value of his auto-knowledge, was about to obey the command, when looking down she saw Mabley crouching low in the bottom of the tonneau, terror-mad and trembling, wailing with a witch-like voice, "More speed, Belling—more speed—faster, faster, faster!"

She gave a quick, contemptuous look at his gray face and the nerveless fingers clutching the idle weapon.

"Why don't you shoot from the back of the tonneau?" she cried. "Give me your pocket-knife." He obeyed her, handing up the knife with twitching fingers. She took it and slashed a round aperture in the back canvas. "There!" she exclaimed. "Fire through that."

He got up, but fell back flaccidly as a bullet whizzed over their heads.

"Give me the gun!" she commanded in high disdain.

"No—no," he said nervously. "I was just a little—"

He raised himself, thrust the muzzle of the rifle through the canvas, and fired instantly, without taking aim.

She glanced from the manifest impo-

"She's doing fifty miles," he said quietly.

The car, plunging, swaying, bumping, jogging down the desperate grade, doubled a point of rocks, and on the instant the firing ceased. Virna saw Bel-



Belling cranked violently

tency at her side to the potent mastery at the wheel, while her heart filled with a strange new exultance in the quiet man who sat there bareheaded, grim, determined, able, taking no heed of the showering shots — the man she had never known till now.

Belling glanced at the speed indicator.

ling tearing at his right arm with his left hand, and when she saw the red blood dripping from his wrist and staining his gray sleeve, she screamed wildly: "Oh, he's wounded — he's wounded! Uncle, can't you help him?"

Belling smiled back and said something she did not hear, but the tone of it

was reassuring. The car glided along a smooth, level stretch of road, while the indicator registered sixty miles. There was only a half-mile of this. Then, before them, rose a stiff up-grade. The car sprang at it valorously, the engine growling like mad. It climbed with panting breath a few hundred feet, then moved slower and slower, until it stopped, with slackening pulse, and all in a moment was silent, inert, dead.

"Tank's empty," said Belling tersely, winding his torn sleeve about his arm, as he stood by the lifeless car. "They must have put a big hole through it."

"Let me do that for you," said Virna, springing to his side.

"Wait! This will be better," she tore off her long veil, twisted it quickly, and began to wind it about his arm.

"Oh, it's only a graze," he said, smiling at her with eyes so full of love that she could not fail to read them.

"I'm glad it happened," he added in a low tone, "seeing that you take so much interest in it."

"You're a bad boy to say that—you know I wouldn't see you injured for all the world." She wound and tied the veil tightly, with trembling hands, while her words sounded sweet in her ears. He had so hungered for such words that he was really glad of the wound that had made her give voice to them.

"Here, you scoundrels, come back—come back!" Kitchell was shouting to the *mozos* who had leaped from the car and were running up the road.

"That's all right," said Mabley. "We'll all vamoose now. Come, everybody. It's only nine or ten miles to the ranch. We'd better hike out at once, for the Yaquis will be following along. They were running after the car when I fired my last shot."

"You mean your only shot," said Virna, with the kind of smile that a man hates to see in the eyes of a woman.

Mabley started up the road, rifle in hand.

"Come on!" he shouted.

"Come on, Virna—Belling," urged Kitchell. "You're both nimbler than me on your feet, so I won't wait. Come right along."

He followed Mabley, both running fast.

"All right," said Belling. "Is everybody out of the car. Where's the maid?"

"Yes—where's Jennie?" cried Virna. "Did she go with the *mozos*? Ah, here she is." She was looking under the hood into the bottom of the car. "Why, she's fainted. Yes, and wounded. Oh, the poor, dear girl!"

Belling lifted the limp, motionless maid back into the seat.

"I'm afraid," he said, very quietly, "that she's about gone."

"Come on!" shouted Kitchell from the first turn above. "No time to lose!"

And he ran on to join the *mozos*.

Belling urged her to leave the car and follow them, for to him her life was worth more than that of all the other women in the world.

"Run! Run!" he said, "I'll stay and look out for her."

"No—no—no!" she insisted. "You shall not stay here alone. You're wounded, and—I mustn't leave Jennie. She's been so faithful to me. And you—oh, John!"

"But she can't live—she's nearly dead. Go on," he commanded. "I'll see her through. She can't last an hour."

"You don't love me, or you wouldn't make me leave you here," she complained feverishly. "I won't go! Jennie, Jennie." She lifted the girl's head in her arms. "Where's that canteen?"

He fumbled about in the basket and found it. He threw some water in Jennie's face, but it failed to revive her. He tried brandy. After a few minutes the girl moaned, opened her eyes, looked unconcernedly at her mistress and passed away, without a word.

"Come!" he urged. "Come quickly!" and Virna turned to follow him.

"Who are those men ahead there in the road?" she asked, pointing to some gray-clothed, sombreroed figures that flitted into the shadows before them. "Mexicans?"

"They look like it." He took a few steps forward. A bullet blew up a puff of dust at his feet. "No, they're Yaquis. They've sneaked along the dry-wash down there and come up and cut us off."

We can't go either way in the road now. We must climb up the side-gulch and get under cover."

"But, uncle! They'll shoot him if he comes back, and I'm afraid he'll try to—he'll be so worried about me."

As she hesitated, in a daze, he put a masterful arm about her and fairly dragged her into the gulch.

"He won't come back—he can't come back," he said, "and this is our only way to get out."

The scrub-oaks grew thick in the gully and screened them, but Belling knew the Yaquis would be beating the bush in a few minutes, so he pulled her along up the little rift in the hills and on through a barrier of ugly cactus clumps that nearly tore their auto-coats from their bodies.

Belling fancied he saw a stronghold above them, at the summit of the butte up which they were now climbing—a rough natural redoubt of rocks.

He heard a shot and, glancing back, he saw the heads of the foremost of the pursuers. He turned, raised his rifle and fired.

"Go on up," he said to her, "and get behind the rocks. I'll join you in a moment."

"But, I'm so afraid something will happen to you," she said starting and then stopping again.

A shot came hurtling up the hill and she scrambled on, while he returned the fire, trying to cover her flight and stop the pursuers. When presently he glanced back and saw she had reached the summit, he turned to follow her. At that instant he felt a brisk prick of pain in his leg, but though the blood streamed down and a giddiness seized him, he pushed up the slope. From a sheltering crag near the summit of the rocky escarpment which was to be their fortress, there was an exposed stretch of a few rods. Gathering his breath, he limped painfully across this space. Amid a hail of bullets, which sickened Virna as she glanced down from behind the rocks at the hill-top, she saw him stagger, fall, get up again, and drag himself forward.

"Oh, oh!" she cried, dismayed and

terrified, as at last he threw himself in behind the wall at her side. "You're wounded again—they have killed you!"

She bent over him, staunching his wounds. It was desperately hot in the little summit-hollow behind the rocks. The rays of the afternoon-sun searched down and seared their faces.

"The canteen," he said. "I brought it along. Where is it?"

She lifted the strap from his shoulder.

"Here," she cried, "drink!"

"No, you first."

For answer she lifted the neck of it to his lips and poured some water down his throat.

"Ah!" said he, "that's good! Now, the rifle."

She laid it in his hands. He dragged himself to a little crevice in the rocks, and lying face-down, thrust the muzzle through it and fired shot after shot. They answered the fire and the bullets flew over the redoubt. Then there was silence for a time.

"Give me that stick there and your cap," he said at last, stifling a groan that rose to his lips. "That's right. It's a trick to make them waste their cartridges." He planted the stick in a crack of the rock above him.

"Lie low!" he cautioned her.

Another shower of leaden pellets flew over them, or flattened against the rocks. Whenever a dark head showed itself down below, his rifle spoke, and more than once he heard an answering yell that told of his true aim. The pursuit was stopped; the Yaquis would come no higher, for the present, at least.

But all through the afternoon and all through the long, cold, moon-lit night he lay there, rifle at rest, firing now and again. He grew stiff, his leg throbbed; his head was hot, his ears buzzed and sang; but all the while he must be peering, peering, with straining, aching eyes and all the while he must keep his rifle clutched with steady grip.

And the sustaining, nerve-compelling power that kept him still alive and alert—what was it? Only a woman's voice, that came to him out of the near-by shadow, soothing, comforting, uplifting—a voice that throbbed with ineffable



He must keep his rifle clutched with steady grip

tenderness and solicitude. A voice full of contrition and reparation:

"Oh, dearest, forgive me! forgive all the cold, indifferent things I've said to you. I didn't dream what you were—I didn't dream of your great, unselfish love for me. But live, only live, and I'll show you what there is in my poor, unworthy heart, for I love you, I love you!"

For reply he only turned his white, drawn, pain-pinched face to her and smiled.

When, early in the morning, the cowboys from the Sultana *rancho* found the burnt auto in the road and scattered the Yaquis from the gulch like fleeing coyotes, Foreman Binney, looking up the slope, saw a brown something on the end of a stick, above the rocks at the summit. It looked like a human head, and he made toward it hastily, discovering at last that it was only a dusty little cap. Inside the redoubt he saw a woman leaning back against a rock, white and still, and a man with torn, blood-stained clothing, lying motionless near her, clutching a rifle thrust through an opening in the little wall.

"Boys," he said, as the others came scrambling up, "the gal looks like she's dead, but they aint no marks on her an' I guess she's only fainted. Yes," he said, as he rubbed her wrists, "she's all right."

"But the man?" asked one of the cowboys. "Poor cuss! He looks pretty well shot up."

"That's what he is, Jim. He's done for, all right. But he sure had the nerve. He stood 'em off. Hadn't been for him they'd 'a' got her all right."

The cowboy bent over the motionless form with admiring tenderness.

"And he stood off the whole blamed pack of 'em—one man ag'in a hundred. That was sand for ye! Wonder if she was worth it?"

When the men, bearing their quiet burdens, reached the road, Jim said in a low tone to Binney:

"Guess she wont ride home in that gas-wagon. Looks like a junk pile, don't it?"

Easy there, Bill! That aint no way to handle a dead man."

"But he aint dead! See—his lips is movin'! Git the whisky! I'll bet a dollar his grit will pull him through after all."

No, he was not dead. Over at the Sultana the doctor gave a hopeful verdict, and Virna was soon nursing him back to life and love.

It was during those long, brilliant days that followed that she came, as afterward she often told herself, to know him, even as she had not known him there among the rocks when as consciousness slipped from him he turned to her and smiled. He smiled now and it was such a smile as may appear upon the face of him who within himself knows he has put up a good fight—done his best for the sheer love of it—without thought of reward here or hereafter.

"I don't deserve you—I don't deserve you!" she told him one day as he lay on his couch, his eyes brimming with love. "You went through so much for me. What would have become of me without you in the auto and up on the hill? Those Yaquis! It makes me tremble to think of them; and you—"

"Well, I hadn't been much use to anybody before, but I guess I made a pretty fair shock-absorber. And that's what I'm going to be to you always, Virna."

"A shock-absorber? Oh, you're more than that, John."

"I want to be," he said determinedly. "I want to be a sixty horse-power engine to pull you up all the bad grades and over the rough places. And I'm going to be somebody—I'm going to work. They sha'n't say, after this, that there's nothing to me but money."

"But it wasn't true," she protested fondly. "There was much more than that—there was the greatest, most unselfish love a man ever had for a blind, unworthy woman."

They were quite alone there on the shaded veranda of the ranch-house, and so—

She bent over and kissed him on the forehead.

A Deal in Planets

BY ALBERT DORRINGTON

ILLUSTRATED BY ADOLPH TREIDLER

ONE of my divers missing!"

Captain Hayes stooped over the lugger's side and peered under the steps where Io San and Kusima Shani were preparing to descend again into the shoal-water of the Vanderdecken Bank.

"Where's Sustu Ma this morning?" he called out.

Io San shook water from his hair and ears; his chest and biceps were gridironed with scars where the jagged reef-points had caught him in his descent.

"Sustu Ma not here to-day," he answered sullenly. "Gone ashore long ago last night. Big thief, Sustu. No good!"

Scattering weeds and shell-litter from his basket he dropped like a plummet into the fretting shoal water. A few bubbles trailed white as blisters where his plug-shaped body moved over the oyster-swathes below.

Hayes watched the diver's lightning movements as he plucked and scooped the golden-edge shell from the shallow floor of the bank. All around on the spongy beds of coral the scattered trepang lay like black cucumbers. The long, blue sea-grass moved and swayed under the diver's feet where the endless lanes of coral shut out the questing barramundi and the shark. With a fish-like motion of the body the diver swept to the surface, a half-filled basket of shell under his arm.

Hayes turned towards the little town that seemed to straddle over the hummock-ridden skyline. It was composed of *kanacka* hovels and boasted a Chinese bank. Around him on every side were pearl-luggers and *béche-de-mer* schooners. The surface of the bay seemed alive with the bobbing heads of sleek-bodied Japanese divers. The loud rattle of knives reached him accompanied by the squalling voices of the shell-openers employed on the big store-ship anchored within a cable's length of the fleet.

It was seldom that a "skin" or swimming-diver deserted, for although Captain Hayes was an iron-fisted disciplinarian, he was a liberal master and generous to a fault in the matter of feeding and berthing his crews of Rotumah men and Japanese divers.

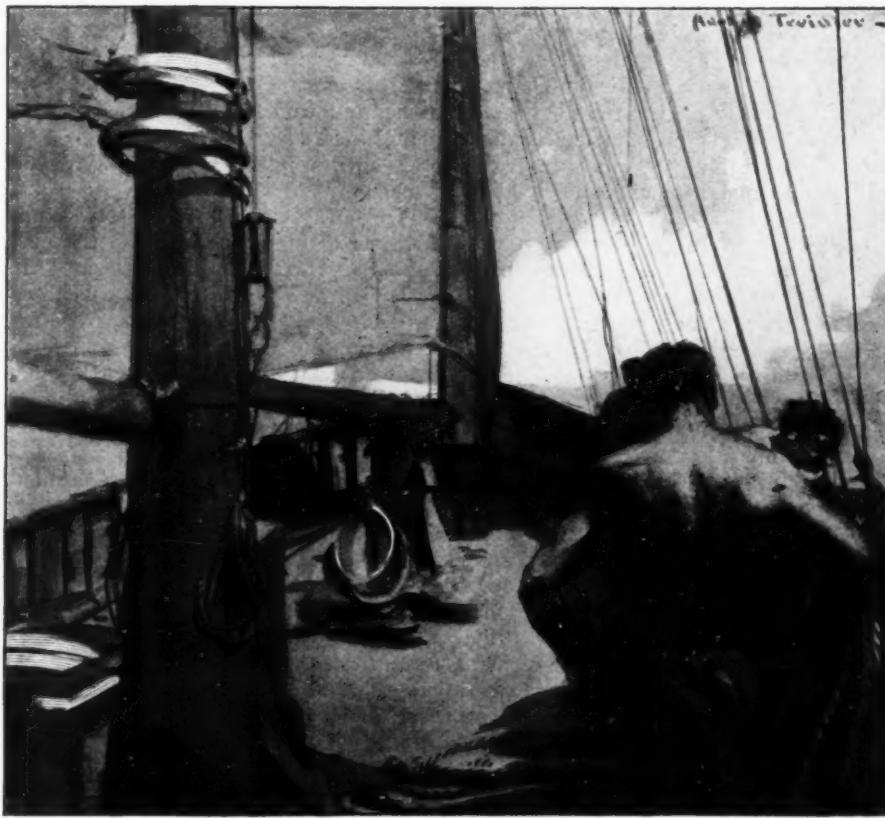
Sustu Ma, the missing diver, had been twice charged with theft of pearl and acquitted, by a hastily formed tribunal of lugger-captains, on the usual plea of insufficient evidence. And as Hayes glanced from his fleet to the sky-line he meditated swiftly upon the cause of Sustu's desertion, until it became clear to him that the little brown man was playing thief on a larger scale than usual.

The buccaneer's meditations were of a brief and hurried nature. Slipping into a dingey he pushed off from the steps and rowed leisurely to the pier situated at the head of an evil-smelling creek known as Deliverance inlet. Once ashore, he strolled thoughtfully down the crooked front street that zig-zagged through interminable sand-hills. A few spindly trees cast ominous blots of shadow across the ant-pitted road. Small groups of *kiwais* and *béche-de-mer* fishers loafed in the doorways of the *kanacka* boarding-houses watching the well-known figure of the man who had held a French gun-boat in check only six months before.

From a word gathered here and there, as he strolled through the township, the buccaneer was certain that something unusual had happened among the wealthy Chinese pearl-buyers.

A *cingalee* girl, with dorian flowers in her hair, tittered softly as he passed. A half-drunk sailor blundered from a near shanty and gaped owlishly at the buccaneer. Hayes caught him by the sleeve gently and swung him round.

"I'll give you a case of gin for that



One of the divers was missing

smile of yours, Jimmy," he said huskily. "Where's Sustu Ma?"

The sailor, an old shell-opener from one of the Dutch Arab Company's boats hiccupped noisily and glanced over his shoulder at the black shanty-keeper watching him from the inside.

"You've been robbed, Hayes," he said in a smothered whisper. "Sustu—hic—sold big pearl he picked up on your bank. Not a blister pearl—hic—on'erstan'; no baroque, either; just a fair hummer, an' half the chows—hic—are in the deal."

"The chows are all right," said the buccaneer lazily. "How much did Sustu get for it, anyhow?"

"The yellow banks opened — hic — their safes to buy it," chuckled the sailor. "It's the loveliest freak-gem y'ever set eyes on."

"You saw it, then?"

"Through the bank window—hic—yesterday. Eight chows were licking an'—hic—breathin' over it. Loveliest gem y'ever saw. They've christened it the 'Three Planets.' Best thing found in the Straits since the Little Coronet was lifted —hic—off the Aroes reef."

Hayes shrugged his shoulders wearily, but his eyes leaped across the crooked line of bamboo-thatched verandas and gambling-dens that hedged in the Chinese Bank at Deliverance inlet.

Nodding absently to the sailor he strode down the road, whistling softly. He was not concerned with the whereabouts of Sustu Ma; he was merely anxious to confront a Chinese bank-proprietor named Willy Ah King whose reputation as an illicit pearl-buyer had traveled from Van Diemen's Gulf to the Batavian fisheries.

As a receiver of stolen gems Willy Ah King had baffled every attempt on the part of the Territorian police to convict him. His agents cruised in their big sampans from Sud Est to Thursday island, and no pearl-lugger was safe from their heathen blandishments and sleight-of-hand thefts.

Despite every precaution to guard their luggers against these Chinese marauders, the fleet-owners were compelled to admit that the finest pearls found on the banks passed mysteriously into the hands of Willy Ah King. The pearl companies fretted and bided their time, hoping some day to catch his agents within shooting distance of their luggers.

Hayes had put all his capital into the six luggers working the shell-strewn floor of the Vanderdecken Bank where the narrow swathes of golden-edge and silver-lip pearl glittered among the coral and trepang beds. And from time to time he learned in a roundabout way how the fruits of his labors were being filched from under his eyes.

The Chinaman is the craftiest law-evader within the gulf. His mind is an abyss of unfathomable schemes and untraceable larcenies. The habits and movements of the white criminal may be part foreseen or anticipated, but to the average investigator the brain of the Mongolian is a jungle and a blank. The most expert detectives in Australia have grown morose and senile in their efforts to unravel the innumerable problems connected with Chinese frauds.

The bank at Deliverance inlet was managed by Willy Ah King and his mysterious Australian wife. It was built of iron, and its dark corridors were lined with Hessian and old canvas sails. There were *pak-a-pau* and *fan-tan* rooms where few white men had ever entered. Pearls were gambled and fought for, but no one ever guessed how Willy Ah King transported his ill-gotten gems from Deliverance inlet to Booby island. His private schooner had often been boarded by water-police and thoroughly searched, the bank had been similarly ransacked from strong room to chimney, yet no more pearls had been found than would cover the head of a pencil.

Hayes entered the bank in time to see a pigtailed head vanish behind a beetle-covered screen. A pair of slant eyes seemed to burn suddenly through the uplifting tobacco-smoke.

"What you want, Hayes? Wha' fo' you come here?"

Willy Ah King heaved his two-hundred-and-fifty-pound bulk into the narrow passage and blinked innocently. "Me welly busy now. You come to-mollow."

"Guess there'll be no to-morrow for you, King, if I'm kept waiting," snapped the buccaneer. "Don't play your to-morrow on me. I've got a nickel-plated bullet here that will cut a hole in your to-morrow. *Savvy?*"

"You welly funny man, Hayes," smiled the big Chinaman. "You talkee shoot, shoot. Me welly tired. Me no *savvy* anything."

"I've been robbed of a three-planet gem, King."

Hayes spoke smoothly and his eyes fell instinctively on the kris-like knife snuggling in the folds of the silken *slanderdang*.

"I want you to make up your mind about returning it. I'll give you till four o'clock this evening; and if the pearl isn't aboard my lugger where it belongs—"

"What you do then?" grinned the celestial placidly.

"Guess you'll know when my heel is on your face, King. I'll give you time to warn your committee of monkey-headed swindlers. I'll allow you most of the afternoon to discuss honest finance."

"To-mollow, Hayes, to-mollow. You welly excited."

The Chinaman wagged his head like a spring-fitted image as the buccaneer picked his way out of the unlit passage. The bank reeked of opium fumes. In the sweating darkness of the back rooms gangs of Filipino and Burghis men sprawled in grotesque attitudes. Some lay with knees up-drawn and eyes staring at the bamboo rafters overhead; others crouched face down on their mats as if someone had flung them from a great height. And above all came the low bubbling sound of opium-pipes.

From every loophole and shutter a

Mongolian face watched him as Hayes swung down the hot, ant-pitted road. At the wharf jetty he paused near an ill-kept house with broken shutters, and listened. A voice had hailed him from within, and he waited somewhat impatiently for it to repeat itself.

In the silence he heard the shrilling wail of a Chinese fiddle that throbbed like a maddened nerve. Muttering softly he moved on, but the voice reached him before he had proceeded a dozen yards.

"Follow the man with the falcon, Hayes."

The buccaneer stared at the broken windows of the house, as if expecting to see the face of the speaker. A door slammed suddenly up-stairs; the sound of slippered feet hurrying along the passage reached him. Another door closed more violently than the first, leaving him to gape at the empty house-front.

The voice was strange to him, and he was inclined to think that the gang of Chinese pearl-thieves were trying to fool and bewilder him.

"Follow the man with the falcon," he muttered. "Guess I'll be following some of their funerals if they don't brighten up their honesty."

Stepping into the dingey he pulled slowly across the bay to where the luggers rolled and sweltered abeam of the Vanderdecken Bank. Swarms of gulls and man-o'-war hawks fed ravenously in the oily backwash, where the careless shell-openers had flung their heaps of burley from the deck of the big storeschooner. Resting on his oars Hayes scanned the half-moon shaped bay, and the dazzling expanse of white beach that stretched to the jungled promontory in the North.

The low thunder of surf on the outer reefs broke sullenly across the bay; a white sail flitted and hung for a moment against the somber green of the wooded headland. The boat was evidently in the hands of an inexperienced sailor and threatened to capsize as the sudden gusts drove it beachward half full of water.

"Chinaman taking a holiday," muttered Hayes. "Ought to be at home washing clothes instead of piling himself on a sandbar."

The next moment he half rose in the dingey, smothering an exclamation of surprise.

Driven ashore by the sudden change of wind, the Chinaman scrambled from the thwarts, his left arm raised as he floundered through the surf, the waves beating about his hips and shoulders.

Pulling closer in-shore and keeping well within the shelter of the mangroves, the buccaneer tied the dingey to an outspreading root and walked to a point overlooking the beach.

The Chinaman was now squatting in the soft white sand, his face towards Deliverance inlet. Perched on his left arm was a full-grown falcon. A hood was drawn over its head, and from time to time the Chinaman's fingers wandered gently over its sleek feathers and knife-like talons.

In a flash the buccaneer recalled the mysterious instructions which had come from the house with the broken shutters. Strolling from the mangrove shade he wheeled suddenly upon the unsuspecting celestial.

The Chinaman rose with a cry and tried to regain the overturned sailing-boat. Hayes caught him by wrist and throat and flung him stammering on the sand-heap. The falcon hopped to the beach, fluttering its wings aimlessly.

"There's nothing to run away for, John." The buccaneer regarded him leisurely. "What are you doing here with that bird?"

The Chinaman trembled violently at sight of the white man with the flashing teeth and somber eyes. Clutching the falcon nervously he shook himself into an upright attitude.

"Me come here to hunt lille birds," he chattered. "Me catchee teal an' duck. Plenty teal over there."

He pointed to a reed-choked lagoon beyond the illimitable range of sand-hills in the North.

"Never heard of a falcon being used to hunt teal," said Hayes suspiciously.

"Welly much likee teal. Me catchee lille black duck, too."

The Chinaman's fingers strayed over the bird's muscular shoulders and hood;

his small slant eyes glanced at the sky from time to time.

"You are telling lies, John." The buccaneer lit a cigar thoughtfully. "Do you know me?" he asked softly.

"You Cap'n Bully Hayes fom the pearlimg lugger," half-whispered the

The Chinaman wriggled uncomfortably and his lips grew dry with fear.

"No, I didn't beat him," Hayes spoke with a touch of remorse in his voice. "Circumstances compelled me to light him up at both ends with a pair of tar-barrels."



The released falcon swooped upward

other. "My father know you welly well. Him say you welly nice man."

"Nice! Of course I'm nice," said the buccaneer ponderingly. "I've been nice to all Chinaman since I was a little boy. But you're lying about that falcon. Didn't your father tell you what I once did to a man who told me lies?"

"You beat him welly much, eh, Cap'n?"

"You no lightee me up with a tal-barrel, Cap'n Hayes. Wha' fo' you wantee make me go blaze? Me likee you."

"I like you, too, John," sighed the buccaneer. "But much as I like you, I shall have to send up your temperature a few hundred degrees unless you climb down to honest facts. Be honest and avoid tar-barrels," he added dryly.

The Chinaman fell on his knees before the scowling white man.

"You no burn me up. Me give you falcon to catchee um pigeon."

"Oh, the falcon catches pigeons!" Hayes gaped a little, then stooping he shook the stammering celestial by the throat. "Who sent you here to catch pigeons? Quick, or I'll squeeze out your ly-ing tongue!"

"My master, Wong Chat, send me over to kill um pigeon belonging to Willy Ah King." The Chinaman caught his breath fiercely and bent his head. "Him say Willy Ah King's pigeon cally letters to pearl-buyers at Booby island. He want me to get letter welly quick."

The buccaneer whistled softly. A thought flashed through his mind that left him cold-eyed and doubtful.

"Sit here," he said to the quivering celestial, "and carry out your master's instructions. And don't move towards that boat until I give you the word."

The Chinaman squatted in the sand obediently, holding the falcon at arm's length while his eyes scanned the far off hills that shut out the squalid town from view.

Hayes strode up and down the beach, heavy browed and brooding, halting at times to watch the land-crabs scuttling over the reef-ends and bars. Occasionally his eye sought the naked hummocks at the head of Deliverance inlet, where the smoke of the town hung sullenly along the skyline.

A sudden shout took him sharply to the water's edge. The Chinaman was pointing to a bird-like speck that rose from the distant hummocks and floated swiftly across the bay.

"That Willy Ah King's pigeon! Him fly over here byemby to Booby island!" The Chinaman danced excitedly on the sand, his eyes glinting strangely.

"Guess you ought to know how to fly your falcon!" cried Hayes. "Keep your head and don't get rattled."

Running to the edge of the peninsular the celestial drew the hood from the falcon's head, halting for a moment as if gauging the height and velocity of the pigeon's flight as it drew nearer.

The buccaneer followed his move-

ments closely until the released falcon swooped upward with the speed of an eagle. For thirty seconds he gazed in amazement at the up-wheeling bird, his blood tingling with excitement. The pigeon appeared to remain stationary in mid-air, as if aware of its enemy's presence. Then it swooped downwards in wild fluttering curves towards the cover of the sheltering bush.

With scarce moving pinions the falcon poised itself like a dark ball over the down-fluttering bird, then with the swiftness of a bullet flashed upon its quarry. A few feathers scattered overhead as the stricken bird fell within five yards of the waiting celestial.

Running forward, he unfastened a small roll of paper from the foot of the bird and presented it timorously to Hayes. Unrolling it, curiously, the buccaneer saw that it was covered with Chinese characters very much smeared and traced in red ink.

Eight years spent among the Mongolian traders of the South Pacific had taught him something of the Chinese language; a glance at the ink-blurred letter revealed its contents. It was addressed to Min Yik, a wealthy pearl-buyer at Booby island, and ran:

Most HONORED SIR:

Our presence grows small at mention of your illustrious name. We beg to approach you at this period of the moon with great news. We are in possession of a very fine lustrous pearl, a sister to the stars and a cousin to our own magnificent sun. It was brought to us by a wretched diver by name of Sus-tu Ma, a poor Japanese dog unworthy of our Imperial connection. I cannot describe the gem we bought from him; the dog accepted five hundred Chilian dollars and departed. It is a peculiar pearl of great orient and milkiness, and is composed of one large planet-gem surrounded by three satellite pearls. It is undoubtedly a freak and will appeal to the eyes of many barbarian kings and ladies chiefly in Amsterdam and Hatton Garden. With many salutations I am hastening to dispatch it to your keeping in the usual way.

P. S. I have been much bothered by a dog named Hayes; and the Territorial police are watching all the roads and exits from Deliverance inlet. All Chinamen are searched.

WILLY AH KING.

Hayes swore impatiently as he pocketed the note and stared at the Chinaman endeavoring to place the hood over the head of the fluttering falcon. He was suddenly conscious of his own inability to cope with the gang of unscrupulous Mongolians who utilized carrier-pigeons to transport messages and illicit pearls from one port to another. It occurred to him that the missing pearl might at that moment be passing through space *per medium* of a fast-flying pigeon. He turned to the Chinaman hastily.

"Your master sent you here to catch Willy Ah King's bird, thinking it was carrying a valuable pearl, I suppose?"

The celestial smiled faintly.

"My master watch Willy Ah King tlain pigeon evely day fлом top of the bank. Byemby he think pigeon cally alle pearl away to Booby island. Then my master, Wong Chat, buy falcom fлом circus-man five, six months ago, an' we teach him eбely day to kill um bird an' fowl."

"You trained the falcon to catch birds in the air," nodded the buccaneer. "Chinaman cut Chinaman, eh? What are you going to do next?"

"My master tell me to wait till one, two, three pigeon fly over. Me wait to-day, to-morrow, long time yet. Me not in welly great hurry, Cap'n."

"Phew!"

The buccaneer regarded the Chinaman's immobile face, the lusterless slant eyes, and stooping shoulders half-curiously.

"You think that the big pearl will come this way if you wait long enough?" he asked quietly.

"Me welly sure. Pearl come along in one lille while. Willy King clevvah man; my master welly smart, too."

Hayes lit his second cigar reflectively and wondered how many of the lugger-captains had been victimized by the gang of illicit merchants, controlled by a pigeon-flying expert named Willy Ah King. The buccaneer was in no hurry to acquire riches, but his muscles leaped at thought of his hard-won treasure slipping into the hands of the slant-eyed robbers. The missing pearl was his exclusive property, and its value could only be judged by

Willy Ah King's letter to the gem-merchant at Booby island.

From his position on the wooded headland he could easily watch the flight of a trained pigeon passing from Deliverance inlet; and unless the bird made a wide detour, he was certain that the falcon would bring down the three planet pearl the moment Willy Ah King's carrier came within striking distance.

The prospect improved Hayes' temper. He was now prepared to stay on the headland until the pearl-carrying pigeon was released from the Bank at Deliverance inlet. Only a Chinaman's brain could have evolved such a scheme. He laughed silently as he paddled up and down the surf-fretted beach, scanning the wide bay from East to West, while the Chinaman caressed the impatient falcon with both hands. Through the hot stillness came the sound of the divers and shell-openers at their work; from time to time a flock of gulls settled in a thrashing cloud on the red hump of the Vanderdecken Bank.

The buccaneer was conscious of a white-painted skiff moving from the luggers towards the promontory. A *kanacka* wearing a wide brimmed panama was at the oars; a lady sat in the stern dressed in a yellow *sarong* and carrying a white umbrella. The skiff appeared to have been circling the small fleet of luggers as if its occupants were interested in the work of the Japanese divers. Approaching the beach swiftly it ran ashore under the lee of a narrow sand pit.

Hayes noted that the lady was examining him carefully through a pair of silver-plated binoculars. Addressing a few words to the *kanacka* she approached smilingly and halted within a dozen paces. Hayes bowed slightly and waited for her to speak.

"I have been watching the pearl divers at work," she began almost breathlessly. "It seems incredible that men can swim under water and collect shells in their baskets."

"It is remarkable," answered Hayes somewhat coldly. "The shells are often hidden in a jungle of sea-grass and coral, and there are times when they are dis-



ANNEKE TWEEDALE -

covered inside the roof of a diver's mouth," he added bitterly.

"It would be interesting to study the methods of these pearl thieves. I have heard that the Chinese buyers are quite unscrupulous."

She spoke eagerly and her eyes seemed to float in a nimbus of liquid violet as she glanced at the buccaneer.

The tropic sun had turned her creamy skin to a delicate olive. And Hayes told himself that she was twenty-three and dangerously pretty.

"The Chinese are perfect gourmands when it comes to eating gems," he answered lazily. "I generally argue with a pearl thief along the barrel of a rifle," he drawled; "it saves thinking."

She laughed somewhat immoderately at his words and flicked the beach-sand with the point of her umbrella. She was of medium height and her semi-European clothes were expensively made. Hayes decided that she was the wife of some prosperous trader or government official stationed at Thursday island.

Calling to her *kanacka* servant she indicated a spot on the beach where she intended to rest for a while. A hamper was brought from the skiff and opened, and wine and food were spread on a snow-white cloth by the violet-eyed woman

The woman wiped her blood-stained wrist

who laughed at the buccaneer's unaccountable impatience.

"Come and picnic on the sands. I have some excellent claret and cold chicken."

She regarded him quizzingly as he tramped up and down the beach.

Hayes desired to be left alone, and the voice of the woman broke harshly upon his thoughts. Still he had no wish to play the part of a boor, and he found himself, after a while seated on the beach staring moodily at a bottle of claret.

"You must not think me bold or curious," she said frankly. "At present I am suffering from an overdose of loneliness and nerve-trouble. It is fully a month since I last saw a woman of my own color and nationality."

The buccaneer almost forgot his own mission in the glamor of her swift-running conversation. He knew that many brave little Australian women turned themselves into female Crusoes for their husbands' sakes, lived out their lives on lonely atolls and trading-stations until madness or pestilence brought them the order of release.

Yet, through her well-conducted chatter he divined a certain uneasiness of manner, as if great things hung on the balance of a word. Behind her, alert and obedient, stood the big-chested *kanacka* servant watching him with sober eyes.

A sudden movement in the rear started him. The Chinaman had run to the water's edge and was pointing excitedly towards Deliverance inlet, where a brown speck fluttered and rose in a straight line towards the peninsular.

"Me catchee pigeon this time, Cap'n!" he cried gleefully. "Waitee one lille while til um cross the water."

Hayes sprang to his feet and discovered that the lady in the yellow *sarong* had raised the hooded falcon from the beach where the excited Chinaman had left it. The bird, unused to being handled so familiarly, struck sharply with its talons at the hand that clutched it.

With a suppressed cry she flung the clawing falcon into the surf beside her. The *kanacka*, standing by the skiff, leaped forward at sight of her blood-stained wrist and smote fiercely at the struggling bird with the blade of an oar. Battered and half-submerged it lay with its wings outstretched on the surface of the incoming tide.

Stifling an oath, Hayes hurled the *kanacka* aside and raised the half-drowned bird from the water. It shivered in his hands, stunned and bewildered, as if the oar-blade had broken its wings.

Hereat the Chinaman danced frantically, pointing skyward to where the swift-moving pigeon was already passing over their heads.

"Why, you hurt my falcon!" he screamed. "Why you come heah an killie my pletty bird? Wha' fo', wha' fo'?" he demanded wrathfully.

The woman wiped her blood-smeared wrist carefully and turned to Hayes.

"I did not think the falcon would strike me. And I am so very fond of birds."

Slowly, almost accidentally, it seemed, she raised her eyes and followed the fast disappearing pigeon until it vanished beyond the forest of mangroves.

Hayes made no response as he swung along the beach, full of rage against what seemed to him an overwhelming piece of ill-fortune. When he returned to the weeping Chinaman, he saw with relief that the lady had departed in her skiff. Watching her for a moment, he fancied she was laughing boisterously under her big white umbrella.

"No good to stay here longer."

He turned to the Chinaman and stared sullenly at the limp, water-dragged falcon in his hands.

"We've been licked badly," he added as he strolled towards the dingey. "And blamed if I could prevent it, either!"

A few minutes later he gained the lugger's side and clambered aboard with his half-smoked cigar fuming between his teeth.

His first mate, Howe, met him near the cuddy, a pair of glasses bulging from his pocket, hinting that he had been a witness to the little comedy enacted on the beach.

"Been picnicing with Willy Ah King's wife, Cap'n?" he began deferentially. "Could see you from here quite easily. She's been cruisin' about the fleet all the mornin'."

Hayes gaped for a moment, then spat away his cigar in disgust.

"That woman Willy Ah King's wife! What in thunder was she doing round here?"

"After pearls I reckon, Cap'n. She's the worst blarneyer in the gulf. She'd have stopped here all day if that hawk hadn't chased the pigeon. She was talkin' to one of the divers at the time, when she suddenly looked up an' spotted some feathers flyin'. She nearly jumped out of the skiff. I heard her tell the *kanacka* to pull for his life and see what was happenin' on the beach."

"The Chinaman with the hawk didn't know her, anyway," growled Hayes.

"And he knows more about Willy Ah King than most men."

"The rich chinkies don't have their wives on view in these parts," answered the mate huskily. "Mrs. Willy lives in a red and white bungalow at Thursday island most of the time. Reckon there aren't ten people in the Straits who know she's a Chinaman's wife."

The buccaneer sat on an empty shell-case and nursed his chin for a while.

It occurred to him that Willy Ah King's wife had been sent over to watch the luggers in the hope of picking up a fresh bargain, and while cruising around she had suddenly became aware of the falconer's design upon her husband's aerial messengers. She had hurried to the peninsula in time to arrest further developments. And she was now on her way to Deliverance inlet to report how she had broken up the cleverly arranged falcon-attack upon the "carriers."

Hayes did not curse as was his usual wont when foiled at the game into which he had been drawn. His rage simmered deep within him, promising ere long to boil over, and Hayes in a boiling rage was no very pleasant spectacle nor hardly such a man as one who cared for his life would choose for a companion. More than all else, he scowled now chiefly at the thought of having been fooled by a woman, despite the fact that the woman was the wife of Willy Ah King, and, being his wife, gifted with a capacity for taking on the cleverness of her clever, subtle husband. In fact, Hayes should have found a certain consolation in the thought that it had required a woman of Willy Ah King's wife's talent to befool him.

The mate swept a heap of shell-litter into the scuppers, glanced furtively at the sky, and then at the heavy browed buccaneer.

"Somebody's been flyin' pigeons over here all the morning," he broke in gloomily. "Here comes another!" he cried, nodding towards a brown object that lifted from the violet haze beyond Deliverance inlet.

The buccaneer almost leaped to his feet and gazed at the low-flying bird moving swiftly through the blinding sun-glare overhead. Darting below, he appeared a few seconds later a shot gun in his hand, his lips twitching strangely. Leaning over the rail he waited until the bird cleared the eastern edge of the Bank and fired twice in succession. The pigeon pitched down, striking a sandy slope where the tide swept in between jagged pinnacles of reef. A moment it fluttered, then was still.

"Pigeon number three—and three's my lucky number!"

Hayes pushed off from the steps in the dingey and guided it through the treacherous lanes of coral where the breakers crashed and fretted over the spongy floor of the Vanderdecken Bank.

Snatching up the bird he almost tore away a tiny parcel secured to its foot with a strong silk thread. Opening it he beheld a triplet of pearls clustered round a planet gem of matchless orient and luster.

He returned to the lugger silently, and, without a word to the gaping mate, passed to his cabin. Later, the mate paused near the stairhead and listened to the chuckling noises that came from below.

"Mad as a hatter!" he muttered. "Just been and risked the only boat we've got to pick up a blamed twopenny bird from a razor-back shoal. Skipper's gone daft," he whispered to one of the divers as the laughter reached him from the buccaneer's cabin.

That night, when the pearl fleet warped to its moorings at Deliverance inlet, it was discovered that the Chinese bank had closed and barred its doors. Seven of its directors had resigned, and through the long hot night the voice of Mrs. Willy Ah King was heard expostulating defensively with her Mongolian husband.

A message had been received from Booby island stating that the third pigeon had not arrived.

The Girl That's Down

BY BRAND WHITLOCK

Author of "The Turn of the Balance," etc

ILLUSTRATED BY F. DE FOREST SCHOOK

[Brand Whitlock, the author of this deeply significant story, is one of the most remarkable young men in American public life to-day. A very few years ago he was a working journalist with an ambition to become a novelist. An early book, "The Thirteenth District," was evidence that this ambition was justified. That story was hailed as the most important political novel of half-a-dozen years, and its author was urged to enter the political game. He became the private secretary of Mayor Jones—"Golden Rule" Jones—of Toledo, Ohio. The cloak of that splendid American, at his death, descended to the shoulders of Brand Whitlock, and as an "independent" he has twice defeated the opposing machines of both "regular" parties and been elected to the Toledo mayoralty. His platform has been, and is, The Golden Rule. He has made honesty pay. He has been talked of for the Governorship of Ohio. Ohio is the "cradle of Presidents"—who knows? Meantime, the present story may be accepted as revealing Brand Whitlock's attitude toward one phase of modern American life as well as one phase of legal "justice." His most recent novel, treating of police-methods, "The Turn of the Balance," has been called "in many essentials the greatest novel ever written by an American."

—THE EDITORS.]

WHEN her name was called, Mace rose heavily from the bench in the matron's room; the girl beside her—the one she had fallen in with a month before—arose at the same time, though not so passively.

As they were ushered into the court-room, the girl sighed, and the sigh irritated Mace; she could not have told why: perhaps it was because she herself had quit sighing long ago. There were signs, indeed, that the girl still had sentimental notions about herself, about her fate, and about life; but the sentimental had long ago gone out of Mace's existence, like the sigh that once expressed it. She felt, in common with the officials, in common with the crowd in the old familiar court-room, in common with the world with whose weary modern mood she was so unconsciously in accord, that there was nothing in her state to sentimentalize over. As for emotions, they were dead within her, and only certain counterfeits of them were to be conjured by gin; but the gin pertained to the night

that was gone; this was morning, with its gray, haggard light filtering into the court-room.

The new girl peered about her a little, but Mace did not. She knew the court-room, knew it and its processes and could predict them unfailingly; she had had experience of them so often they had lost all meaning for her, just as they had lost all meaning for every one concerned in the official evocation of them, just as they had lost all meaning for the world outside—the old litany of sorrow and shame had been used so often that its spirit had departed, leaving only its ghastly form behind.

Beyond the court-room there was for her, thought Mace—if she thought then at all—the black van, the striped gingham gown, the bread and molasses of the workhouse; then the pavement again—until one of the fly coppers should pick her up; then all would be repeated as before.

Silly! thought Mace of the new girl. But the new girl had not noticed Mace's



"Not guilty," she said

irritation ; she clung close as they stepped forward to the bar. The new girl, perhaps, was partially conscious of the fact that the officers of the court, the reporters, all the habitués of the place, immediately displayed that interest which is always excited by the presentation, in however squalid a form, of the oldest human problem ; something like a laugh went round, and it was evident that the attachés of the court expected the case, as Mace expected it, to be disposed of in the usual jaunty way.

The prosecutor read the affidavits, stated that the girls were charged with "loitering," and asked them whether they would plead guilty or not guilty.

The new girl gave a little frightened look toward Mace, and dropped her eyes. Mace hesitated, and then lifted her eyes defiantly.

"Not guilty," she said.
And the new girl repeated after her :
"Not guilty."

Suddenly, however, the look of defiance—the old defiance of former appearances—died out of Mace's countenance, and in its place appeared a mild surprise and wonder, for, instead of the familiar figure on the bench, there was a new man, not at all like the old one, and there was something disturbing in the fact of this new man, as there is in all change. To some in that court-room his sensitive face appeared weak ; to Mace, he was only young. And Mace wondered who he was and how he came to be there. Just then he turned his gaze toward her, and as she felt in that gaze a certain lack of harshness that, for her, amounted almost to kindness, a little blush was perceptible even under the powder which, like

a somewhat soiled envelope, covered her face. Then the prosecutor called the officer, who came forward, glanced at the girls contemptuously, and said:

"I picked these girls up down the line last night; they've been cruising around down there for a month."

And addressing himself now more directly to the bench, he said perspicuously:

"I know them, your honor, they're no good."

The officer's air gave one to understand that this settled the matter and closed the case. The clerk of the court stood at the elbow of the new magistrate, possibly in a kindly effort to help out his inexperience in thus judging and condemning human souls, and said in a tone that was respectful rather than confidential:

"About ten and costs."

But the new judge hesitated. It all seemed simple enough, of course; the girls had probably been "loitering;" there was the law, printed in the worn volume of the ordinances, automatically prescribing the penalty, and yet—

"They always give them about ten and costs," said the clerk, as if the new judge had not understood.

And the officer who had arrested the girls moved forward, as one who alone could minister and relieve, and said, vouching for their bad character with perhaps a little more satisfaction than men oftentimes vouch for the good characters of others:

"I know these girls. They're old timers. They've been here before."

It was, of course, to be said of these girls, in the sinister phrase of civilized modernity, that they were "known to the police"—as cruel a fate, perhaps, as society has yet devised. Most people, doubtless, especially the wise, the learned, and the virtuous, thought just as the policeman thought, just as the clerk thought, that the proper, necessary, and even indispensable thing was to fine these girls ten dollars and costs, and to put them in prison, unless indeed, they had been frugal enough to save from the proceeds of their miserable and precarious trade suf-

ficient money to pay their fines, that is, to buy society off, to bribe it not to take its revenge upon them.

And they all thought this, from habit, even though they knew that these girls, or Mace, at least, had been there many times before, that she had doubtless been fined and doubtless been in prison for this very thing, and yet here she was, turning up again in the old predicament, little changed, unless it were to show a little more the wear and tear of her fearful life. It was apparent that the remedy prescribed by society had done her no good, nor had it, by the example so dearly cherished by society, done others like her any good; for, beside the new girl, there were other girls arraigned on that morning in every court in Christendom, and from that time to this, other girls have been arraigned in the same manner, and from this time onward in the same manner, the process will go on just as before.

And nobody was any better; neither Mace nor any girl had been saved or helped by it. If it had had any effect at all, it had been merely to push her farther down, if that were possible, further to harden and brutalize those officials whom society paid—partly out of the proceeds of those girls' crimes.

The officer had turned to go, thinking his work done and the hearing ended. All of the accustomed in that dingy courtroom thought the hearing at an end. Was it not, in law, all sufficient that, having been there before, provision should be made for their being there again? Even Mace herself was of this mind, and knowing the judge to be a new one, she had only the slight interest that pertains to any novelty. And this was not much, for the clerk, whispering to him, was evidently instructing him in the hopeless precedents of the place.

Mace had no illusions as to the result; indeed, no one there had any illusions; for no place in the world is so absolutely without illusions as a police-court. This, in its way, was an advantage, had it not been for the further fact that the place was also without ideals. No one there had any illusions about Mace or her com-

panion; in the mind of none was there any doubt as to what they were, or if not quite that, any doubt as to what they had done. This place, without illusions and without ideals, asked only one question—"Did you?" It never prefixed to its question any extenuating, illuminating, human "Why?"

And even if, for instance, it had asked Mace why, she could not have told. She had done most things in her life, so far as she was able to tell, not so much because she wished to do them, as because she had to; she had been led about, as it were, much as this officer, the fly cop, Delaney, had led her about, seizing her by the arm and pushing her along to turnkey, matron, bailiff, clerk, prosecutor, judge, and guard. Had any one thought to ask her of her companion, she had one phrase—like the court with its euphemism about "loitering"—she would have said that she was "gone;" but as to herself, she would have said that she was down and out.

These few phrases were sufficient; they had their meaning, which was more than could be said of the phrases current in the world above her—such phrases as "law and order," "the criminal classes," "encouragement of vice," or "suspension of crime," etc., employed by editors, preachers, and publicists. These meant as little to Mace as they meant to those who used them; if they meant anything whatever to her, they meant railing accusations and the application of a force that hurt her each time a little more, but never helped her. No one had ever descended to her from the world above with a kind look, a helpful word, or even a cup of water. She had a dim, unposed, but all inclusive understanding, more a feeling than a concept of her intelligence, that for her and this companion by her side there was no hope there or anywhere in this world, or, at least, in the civilized portions of this world. Could they have gone to some uncivilized portion of the world, they might there, perhaps, have found savages willing to help them a little, willing to give them something to eat or something to wear. Or, if there remained any undiscovered continent in the world, they might have gone there with

other criminals, and with a new chance in life, as was the case in Australia, have reared anew the structure of their existence, founded new societies, built new cities, erected new systems, acquired property, grown respectable, and, in time, have constructed churches and prisons of their own.

But here, in our civilized society, there was no place for them—no place but the pavement, or some miserable tenement, or the river. There was no place for them in the world above them, no sympathy, no companionship, no work, no hope. Even had their lives heretofore not been such as to unfit and disqualify them for all kinds of useful toil, no one would have been willing to hire them, no one would have been willing to take them into his home—certainly not into ~~her~~ home—as servant or worker of any kind. They were not welcome in any public place—theatre, church, or saloon—except the lowest kind of saloon. It is true, perhaps, that they might have gone, for a little length of time, to a place called a "retreat," but in the end, they would have been cast back on to the pavement again, bereft, perhaps, of the only happiness that life had given them since they left the vale of childhood.

Mace remembered the "retreat" well enough—the old house, stranded as she had been stranded, in the poor part of the town, whence the residence-district, with its respectability, was slowly receding like a wavering shore-line before the encroachments of the steady flood-tide of the business-district. The patronesses of this retreat evidently had more fear of catching Mace's badness than faith in Mace's catching their goodness, for the house had a sign over the door to warn the world as to just what manner of people dwelt therein. Inside, as out, it was gloomy, and the walls were decorated with depressing mottoes giving forth obvious moral truths intended to instruct people in the art of being good, but neglecting to state that, in a civilization like ours, before one, according to the standards of that civilization, can be good, it is necessary to have money; and the only means society had left Mace of getting

money was, by the very terms of that retreat denied her. And there, in the doleful evenings, the girls might sit and be edified by the singing of hymns or the reading of tracts pretendedly based on the philosophy of One who, when on this earth, was not afraid to associate on terms divinely human with such as found refuge there.

But these modern followers held themselves far from any contact with these girls, except on terms of patronage from which all comradeship, all sense of human relationship was expelled. And here they were to dwell for a time, pending the moral change which no one really thought could ever occur in them, because, before the change could occur in them, a change must occur in those who made the society which environed them. And in those gloomy apartments, on those doleful evenings, amid the whinings of that little reed organ, the reading of those tracts, the singing of those hymns, and the contemplation of those mural mottoes, were nothing but reminders of what they had been, and perhaps little more than the vague, misty hope of what they might yet become. And this was all—this, or the pavement, or the prison, or the river.

There was in Mace no longer anything attractive, either in feature or attire. Even at its best, with all her tawdry finery heaped upon her, that attire made the very impression which the vestige of womanhood in her had sought most to avoid. And yet she could recall a childhood, when she had dwelt in that kingdom of which little children are said to be the model—the kingdom which is without sin because it is without law. But the world had cast her out of that and now, every hand with which she came in contact was thrust out, not to help, but to hurt, to push her farther along the dark road which ended in blackness and despair.

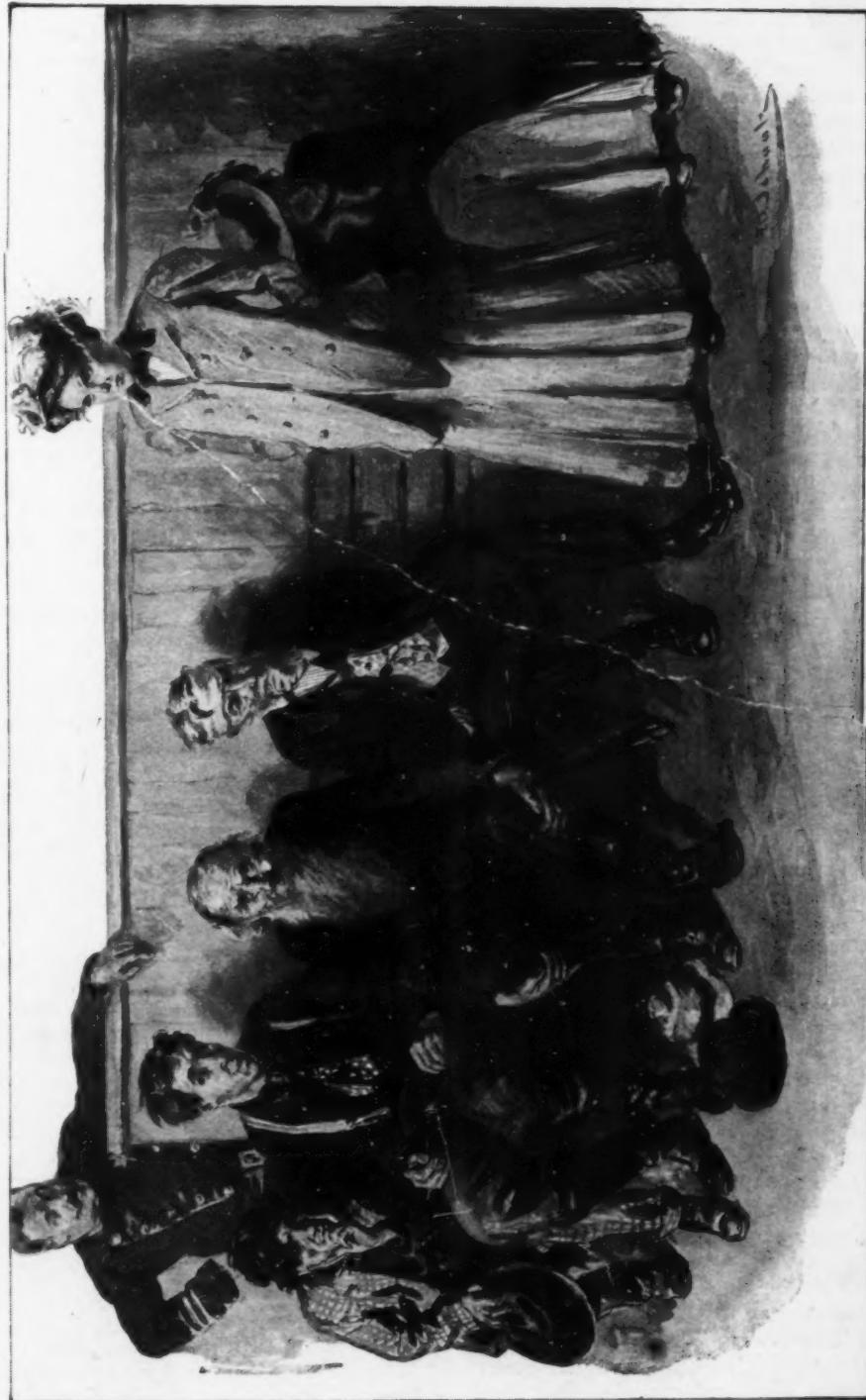
Mace had known herself to marvel, once upon a time, that in the act which brought condemnation, there was another person for whom society had no condemnation, at whom it did little more than to wag its head in playful reproof before

it received the interesting offender to its arms again. And so, in those rare moments of speculation on the right of things in this world, she had come to the conclusion that the law meant one thing for the woman and another for the man, one thing to the poor and another to the rich. What, to use the euphemism of the police-officer, was to her such a dark voyage was to those others merely an idle cruise. She was, of course, unread and so unacquainted with the tale of Aholah and Aholibah, but while it had never once been cited for her benefit, she had known the law, "Then shall the man be guiltless; but the woman shall bear her iniquity." And without having studied, with modern economists, the law of the economic dependence of woman, she summed up, too logically, the whole of law in the conviction that the one crime lay in being poor.

As for society, in its thought of her, it persisted in the delusion that hers was a pleasant and happy lot. It invariably spoke of her as if her choice had been premeditated, and chose to regard her as the creature of a joyous environment who was exchanging the uncertainties of a future far remote, for the certainties of a happy present, and she might almost have thought, hearing society talk and speculate about her, as sometimes it did with bated breath, that her lot was to be envied, if one only had the courage to select it.

Society did not pause to reflect that her lot was mean and sordid, that she led a life of constant, cruel shame, of want and hardship, in which food itself was scarce, and that only now and then, in some moment of despair, was she able to forget, in the liquor which society, as a silent partner in the enterprise, provided for her. Society did not reflect that she was where she was and what she was, not because she wished to be, but because she had to be; society did not reflect that it had made her what she was and put her where she was; that it kept her there remorselessly and with a shame that should be considered greater than any she could know.

There were in that society persons respected, admired, and emulated, whose



Mace knew the court and its processes and could predict them unfailingly

failures differed in degree but not in kind from those which society so fearfully punished in her. There were, for instance, lawyers who sold their brains for prices far higher than those for which these girls sold their souls; editors, writers, artists, and statesmen who sold talent and influence, and even clergymen who sold their abilities, finding it convenient to condemn only the vulgar vices which the refined members of their own congregations were not tempted to commit. And there were, too, respected women who had sold themselves, or by their parents had been sold, to men, and thought that the act underwent some subtle antiseptic process by reason of the observance of certain conventional formulas. For all these, society had no condemnation, but rather commendation and reward.

Of these things, Mace had a feeling, very vague and very uncertain, but in its effect upon her, very conclusive, after all. She felt that she was of no use or value in the world; and yet she was of far greater importance, after all, than she knew or imagined. She belonged, indeed, to the oldest profession in the world; she had been treated of exhaustively by moralists and savants and economists, to say nothing of the fact that she had been the subject and inspirer of folios of foolish legislation. Had she known all this, she might not have been without consolation.

She was not aware of the fact that she played an important and necessary place in society as constituted. That quarter of the town which she was compelled to inhabit was more important than she knew. It contributed of the funds it made by such dreadful waste of body and at such sacrifice of soul, out of its death and destruction, to the support of many of the most fashionable institutions of the city, and there were fine and delicate ladies on the avenues and boulevards whose furs and costly garments were provided from the rents of those structures in which miserable creatures hid away by day; and there were gentlemen, pillars in the church, whose pockets, though indirectly, were filled with money that came from this source and from which they reared universities and temples.

That there might be wealth and affluence at the one end of the city, it was necessary that Mace and her companions should live in poverty and vice at the other; and their sacrifices were necessary to selfishness and luxury far away. Their business was a profitable one, not to them but to those who condemned them. Where they dwelt, property values were kept low by economic law so that taxes could be avoided and laws violated, and as a result of the moral degradation of these girls and their constant or occasional companions, they were mulcted in heavy sums for rent.

And yet it was the importance of the hopeless; for there was no more hope for her than there was for that society which produced her, and would be none until the day, should it ever come, when those who drew back their skirts for fear of defilement should realize their responsibility for this: realize that their extravagances, their luxury, their very refinement even, the things they counted on to make their lives happier and themselves better than others are made by the compulsory sacrifices of those condemned and miserable ones.

But even such superficial and fugitive speculations were not for Mace, any more than they were for those whose extortions suggest them; just now she was beginning to wonder at the unusual delay in judgment. For the officer had not gone: he still stood there; and the clerk drew back in some incertitude from the new judge; and the new judge himself was speaking not to her, strangely enough, but to the officer.

"The court is aware," spoke the voice, to the tones of which that court was not yet accustomed, a tone of such quality as to suggest the lack of likelihood of courts becoming accustomed to it for some decades hence, "the court is aware, of course, of the statute on loitering. But just what, in your mind, is meant by loitering? In other words, just what were these girls doing that led you to arrest them?"

The officer, disconcerted for an instant, recovered himself, mentioned a shady, disreputable street in the city and then added:

"I picked them up there last night about nine o'clock. They were talking with two men."

"What were the two men doing?"

"Talking to the girls. They've been cruising around down there, as I stated, holding up men."

"Do you mean that they were robbing men?"

"No, not that."

"Did the men resist them?"

The officer looked as if he were being guyed.

"No," he said finally. And then lowering his head a little, and glancing up under his eyebrows, he said:

"Aw, you know what I mean."

"You mean that the men were cruising about, too, don't you?"

"Yes, I suppose they were."

"So that the girls were doing no more than the men?"

"No, I suppose not."

"And whatever these girls may have done in the past, within your knowledge or belief"—it seemed well enough to indulge in some legal phraseology—"there were always men doing the same thing, no less and no more, were there not?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

"Then why did you not bring the men in also?"

The officer did not hesitate long; he was frank enough and honest enough, and he was doing his duty well, doing, indeed, just what society wished him to do and was paying him for doing. And he said:

"It is not customary to bring the men in."

The new judge leaned back in his chair, and his gaze, wandering from the officer and from the girls before him, fixed itself, finally, on some obscure point far out the tall windows of the court-room, across the ugly roofs and chimneys of that hideous quarter of the town.

"I confess," he said, "that I can not solve this problem—the oldest in the world. Perhaps, if I had the men before me, I might do so, although I am not certain. There would be others, doubtless, besides these girls, besides those men, who

are concerned in this offence, others whom the processes of this court can not reach."

He paused a moment and gazed on as before. Then it seemed that he would speak again, continuing his reflections, but he left off as if, after all, they were of little utility.

And then he said, as one who recalls himself from a reverie:

"The defendants may be discharged."

He bent his head and wrote in his docket.

The accustomed ones in the court-room exchanged glances, and Mace herself did not understand. She looked up at the new judge, then at the girl beside her, and wondered.

The new judge looked at her.

"You may go," he said.

The old bailiff, with a functionary's facility in ending painful scenes, touched her on the shoulder with his gavel, then with the same insignia of authority, pointed toward the door, and Mace and her companion went out of the court-room, back to the only life they knew or could know, to resume doubtless, their hopeless cruise in those back waters of the sea of life. But they went with a more tripping gait than they had come, and, as she left, Mace herself could not refrain from casting back one little human look of triumph, over her shoulder, at the discomfited officer she left behind.

In the street outside, she paused. The winter sun was shining warm.

"Which way?" asked the new girl, taking a step, however, in the old direction.

"Wait a minute," said Mace. She stood and squinted up at the sun, and then her breast rose and fell as she took a deep breath of the keen air.

"Say, kid," she said presently, "how far is your home from here?"

"About thirty miles down in the country. Why?" She put the question almost timidly.

"Well, I was thinking, after what the new beak said—you see, you're young yet; you're not like me, and—and then maybe—"

To Mace there had come a new sense,

a sense of having been, for a moment, restored to that humanity from which so long she had been excluded. Ignorant as she was, unaware that she had been the subject of a striking phrase by Cato, and of an imperishable paragraph by the famous historian of European morals, whose imaginative vision could behold her, while creeds and civilizations rise and fall, the eternal priestess of humanity, blasted for the sins of the people, she

had heard a moment before one accent of that spiritual voice which through America's prophetic poet had called to her, "Not till the sun excludes you, do I exclude you;" and that sun was warm upon her now, and for the moment warm within her heart. And as she buttoned her little tan-colored jacket about her, she said:

"Not that way this morning, kid. We'll start the other way. It wont hurt to try."



"Not that way this morning, kid!"

Bald Wolf Beautiful

BY EDWARD BOLTMWOOD

BURTON, the ranch-foreman, was nailing up gaudy window-curtains in the front room of the little office-building, when John Heffren came in to buy cigaret papers from the tobacco-box.

"Kind of adcrnin', be you?" said the veteran cowboy. "When's Mrs. Burton all due, anyhow?"

"Next week," replied the foreman, surveying the decorations proudly. "This is the sitting-room. How does the scenery hit you?"

"Hi Henry's Minstrels aint got nothin' on this," John said. "Give me a sack of smokin', now you're at it."

"Have a seat," invited Burton. "Rest your hat awhile."

But the chair bristled with various ridiculous cushions and plush rosettes, so Heffren remained standing. He tried to lay his *sombrero* on the table, but a vase of glass-flowers intervened. Burton had covered the trunk-like tobacco-box with flaming calico in order to disguise it as a divan. The tapestry caused the process of opening the box to be a matter of extreme difficulty, and the foreman muttered luridly.

"Don't vitooperate the furniture, Burton," advised John. "A terbacker-box aint got no business bein' anythin' else but just a terbacker-box—not really. Dress her up like a downy couch, and she's bound to act and look as silly as I would in a pink kiymonier. Let's go out of this settin'-room to some place where we can set down."

He stretched himself on the boards of the piazza and rolled a cigaret, while Burton entered the purchases in the tobacco-book.

"This here artistic beautifyin' of things up," Heffren said, "aint what Canuck Pete calls a 'veeve-la-baggytell.' It takes meditation, same as matrimony or stud-poker. Once I seen a whole and entire settlement heave in, fervent, for to

beautify of its fool self; and since then, Burton, I sure knows more about art-troubles than a Chinaman does about suds.

"Bald Wolf was the name to this village, a kind of grangerized cow-town. It was dreadful domestic. I judge that for baby-carriages and front yards Bald Wolf outheld any place of its poppylation in South Dakota. Yes, sir, them Bald Wolfers was wedded up to their hocks, but for all that they warn't a unhappy communit. 'Cause why? 'Cause not a single wife in Bald Wolf hankered for to wear the habil'ments appertainin' to the under-limbs of the opposite sect. The women didn't diversify out of their own reservation, the men watched the bartender wipe up whenever they wanted, the kids erected mud-pies in the front-yards, and you couldn't find matrimonial discontent in Bald Wolf with a search-warrant.

"Then Mrs. Gus Doogleby waltzes back to the East, and we becomes artitic. Shucks!"

"Doogleby's wife had wintered at Boston, or Sioux City, or some misbegotten Eastern camp, leaving Gus and her two youngsters in Bald Wolf. The evenin' that she detrained again at the home-ranch, we was most of us revolvin' around down to the railroad-station, suspicionatin' that the Eastern country might have put some new kinks into Mrs. Gus Doogleby. I stood by the water-tank with Ginger Carr, an observant critter.

"'Holee smoke!' grunts Ginger, observant of Mrs. Gus on the platform. 'I vetoes her action and I vetoes her harness. Yonder is cert'nly heap bad-medicine for Gus.'

"You see, Mrs. Doogleby had learned to prance with a haughty gait, hands and feet swingin', and she chuck's up her nose like she smelled iniquity. Also she's consid'rable long fixed on raiment. Also she

packs a pair of eye-specs, with a celluloid handle to 'em, through which she squints in a terrifyin' manner.

"'Bald Wolf,' says Ginger Carr, 'is on the brink of doin's. I'm a married man,' says he, 'and I know. Something is goin' to culminate,' says he.

"Well, after Angelina Doogleby had fed and watered and cinched up and ranged around a spell, somethin' did culminate, for a fact.

"One day I emigrates into the Good Luck for a couple of fingers of red ruin, and here is Doogleby clamped to the free-lunch counter, throwin' the grub like coal into a battleship.

"'What p'tic'lar brand of breakfast-food is you all advertisin' of?' says I sarcastic.

"Doogleby, he don't smile none. He's sad, Doogleby is.

"'I'm advertisin' the Ladies' Village Improvement and Household Art 'Sociation of Bald Wolf,' he says. 'Angelina's the war-chief and she has bunched 'em down to our mansion for the first palaver. Consequently, my culinary department is dehorned, and me and my kids is givin' continuous performances of the Two Orphans. My kids has to consume air-tight nourishment out of cans at the grocery-store, whilst I pulverizes my digestion with crackers and head-cheese. Pass the pickles,' he says.

"Ben Clinker parades in, and Carr, and One-eye Beach, all family men. They caucused prompt around the lunch-bowl, and the bar-keep looks at 'em harsh, and Ginger Carr bit off a hunk of Dutch sausage that would 'a' choked Bismarck.

"'Village Improvement!' he moans. 'I've been scoutin' under your parlor-winders, Gus. That aint no village improvement. That's the Old Home Week of the Long Distance Talky-talk Club. Likewise, they has nailed up a flag with readin' onto it.'

"'Which it reads "Bald Wolf Beautiful,"' says One-eye Beach, 'and "Art for Our City,"' he says.

"'Art!' says Ben Clinker. 'With me livin' on bologna and pushin' the baby-carriage! That's art, dad fetch it!'

"I had the laugh on 'em, bein' a foot-

loose maverick and boardin' with the Widder Sprague, who hadn't been rounded up any by the Village Improvers. I commiserated with Doogleby and them spouses, and I told the Widder Sprague so. She was a benev'lent-built lady with a big heart and two chins, risin' fifty years, and the best pie-cook from Cheyenne to the Black Hills. Motherly, too, though she didn't have no kiddies of her own.

"'There aint a lick of sense in the proceedin's of those females,' says Mrs. Sprague. 'But 'twont last long. They'll sicken of it, or mill, or stampede—you hear me, John Heffren.'

"Howsomever, the widder didn't savvy the artistic p'ison that Angelina Doogleby was injectin' into the social life of Bald Wolf. First off the reel, the improvement outfit made proclamation that the schoolhouse had got to be painted. Also they picked out the colors—peevish green and yaller, like soused cabbage. One-eye Beach, he was the school-c'mtee, and he r'ared and pitched and charged and balked, but said gyrations was of no more 'count than a toad tryin' to stop a locomotive. The lady improvers piled in and painted that schoolhouse theirselves! It took 'em three days, and another day to wash the kalsomine off of theirselves, and three more days to talk it over; and for a week there aint hardly a hot mess of victuals cooked, nor a kid's hair combed, in the whole city of Bald Wolf.

"'Likewise, my twins careen into the rain-barrel three times a day, on the average,' says Ginger Carr. 'This is a tough hand, Beach. How do you play it?'

"'Which I will pass the buck and make it a jack,' says One-eye Beach, 'but with the playin' of this hand I aint no more 'quainted than a Injun is with the hind sight of a gun,' he says.

"The three of us was in the Good Luck, imbibin' some.

"'The schoolhouse looks dandy,' says I, 'striped up that a-way.'

"'Like a totem-pole,' snorts Carr.

"'Which I tells my wife a schoolhouse is a schoolhouse,' says One-eye Beach, scornful. "'Taint a ice-cream-soda-fountain!'

"Then Doogleby, he romps in, and we could see by his face he had bulletins.

"Hey, you artistic sots!" said Doogleby. "Hump out! Rake up! Embellish! Adorn! Fasten your spavined intellects onto this, will you?"

"With that he slams a paper on the bar. It said how the Lady Improvers was about to have a front yard contest. They was goin' to decorate and beautify the front yards in Bald Wolf for a week, and then the men was to vote who had done it best, and what female roped the high-mark was to get a gold piece and run the 'sociation for the year ensuin' thereof.

"Here we goes for another week of bliss and canned tomatters!" says Ginger. "Let joy," he says, "be unconfined. I'll just trot home and bed down the twins," says he.

"Which my vest is shy on buttons," said One-eye Beach, "and if any gent'll spare me a needle and thread, I'll get busy."

"When I gave Mrs. Sprague the news, she went up in the air.

"Consarn 'em!" she says. "A front yard is meant to be lived in, aint it? Beautify! Beautify my great-aunt's uncle!"

"She was a real fine woman, the widder was.

"That front yard week was most cert'-nly a spasm. Compared to paintin' the schoolhouse, it was like the Powder River round-up alongside tea with the minister. The women disbursed arches and festoons and Christmas-trees and do-funnies 'till the shacks behind 'em was plumb vanished. Doogleby and Ben Clinker couldn't git into their houses no-how—had to sleep on the pool-table at the Good Luck Saloon. As for the kids of Bald Wolf, why, they hadn't no place at all to cavort in, 'cept the street and the creek; and the city marshal, he was worn to a frazzle, fishin' of 'em out.

"You couldn't see Ginger Carr's front yard none whatever, 'cause of a solid block of flowerin' thorn-bushes, cut off the mountain; and a motter, 'God Bless our Home,' stuck a-top of 'em; and the twins outside the fence, eatin' raw bacon and pickin' thorns out o' each other.

"Mrs. One-Eye Beach allows she'll lay over the field with a big paste-board dingus to tell time by, which she calls a sun-dile, and plants square on her front walk. The night before the contest I see old One-eye in the dark, scratchin' matches and tryin' to set his watch by this contraption.

"Which it is wuthless," he says, "and obstructive," and he wallops the sun-dile with the toe of his boot.

"But there! that was the solitary spark of manhood that illoomines Bald Wolf for the week. Angelina Doogleby had the manhood and womanhood of Bald Wolf treed and out on a limb. This artistic movement had kerflummoxed the men complete. It was new to 'em, and strange, and overpowerin', same as if they had met a honest Mexican, and on the mornin' of the contest they come to Angelina's heel like setter-dogs, for to referee this front-yard *batalla*.

"Course, I was on the jury with the rest, and right after breakfast the widder corrals me.

"Heffren," says she, "Mrs. O. T. Sprague enters herself into this tournamen't, and you steers the empires this way afore the last ball is pitched," says she.

"Well, sir, I'm flabbergasted. I looks at the rusty strip of Jackson-grass betwixt the widder's tepee and the sidewalk, and I'm sure flabbergasted. She lived seclooded on a side street, 'round the angle of a high board-fence.

"Mrs. Sprague," I said, "you stand as much chance for the prize as Rockefeller does for the White House."

"Never you mind," said she. "You steer the empires this way, John. I'll show that gang of squaws," said she, "somethin' about the artistic d'velopment of front yards that they've disremembered."

"It was fryin' hot, and Angelina Doogleby walked us a-foot up and down Bald Wolf till I calc'lated my knee-pans were comin' out of the back of my neck. We shassayed here and we shassayed there, ladies' chain and balance partners; and we was blinded with gazin' at garlands, and wreat's, and streamers, and truck enough to turn the Mohave Desert into a cosy-corner. The front yards of

Bald Wolf was cert'nly a blaze of glory—I aint seen the like since Conk Hoover cracked my head with a bung-starter. Fin'ly, One-eye Beach lays down and begs.

"'Which we're ready to vote,' he shouts. 'Let's quit, and call it a draw.'

"'Vote! Vote!' whooped the Bald Wolfers and Wolfesses.

"So the men formed a ring in front of the postoffice and the women jumped around; and you'd 'a' thought by the festiv'ties 'twas shore a lynchin' or a barbecue.

"'Well,' says Clinker, 'I expect the vista adjacent to my bungalow is the pippin. I expect Maria tramps off with the cup,' he says.

"At that there was a howl from Augustus Doogleby.

"'Not by a long sight!' he yells. 'The Doogleby family has had trouble enough over this yard-epidemic, and we don't propose to waste it. We propose to hogtie that prize,' and he whirls a hand to his pistol-pocket.

"'Which I'm in,' said Beach. 'Which my stack goes to the center, and me ready to play therefor, with guns or otherwise. This trophy's awarded a lot to Daisy Marguerite Beach,' said he.

"It looks 'most like somebody'd get creased, so I makes a Hague conference of myself.

"'Gentlemen,' I says, 'we aint yet viewed all the remains. There's one landscape we aint empired onto. I refer,' says I, 'to the artistic estate of Mrs. O. T. Sprague.'

"They laughed, same's I hoped for. I only done it to raise a laugh. And, say, you'd ought to 'a' heard that laugh—it would 'a' stampeded fat-stock. Angelina Doogleby, she cackled the shrillest and raised her nose higher'n taxes.

"'Mrs. Sprague?' she screamed. 'That ph'listine? That vulgar parv'noo? Oh, rats!' said she.

"But they all projected down the widder's side street, just the same, laughin' and cacklin'. I hung back, sort of 'shamed. Only for to stop the gun-talk,

I wouldn't 'a' started 'em to guy the widder.

"I see the mob make a sudden halt around the corner of the board fence, par'lyzed. Then the men waves their hats and cheers and cheers, and I see the women scatter a little, this a-way and that, like a bunch of ponies a mite flustered but keepin' their eyes on what flustered 'em. I hears a dozen men singin' out together 'Miss' Sprague wins! First prize! First prize for Miss' Sprague!"

"I takes off down there plenty quick to observe what's whatever.

"And here was all the juvenile kids in Bald Wolf riotin' on the widder's grass-patch. A big table stood to one side, rigged low for the youngsters and saggin' with a c'lection of cookies and turnovers and pies and ginger-bread that would 'a' fed Cuba before the war. The children was playin', and rollin', and crowin', and it sure was kind of pretty to see 'em, and Mrs. Sprague bustlin' round. Every now and again she'd snake a yearlin' out of the herd, and lead it to a wash-tub, and give it the all-firedest scrubbin' you ever behelt. But the kids didn't kick none. On a tree was a placard and it said 'Art Be Durned!' that's what it said.

"Did they give her the prize for the best embellished yard in Bald Wolf? Did they? You can bet both your stiff shirts they did, Burton—women and all, even Angelina Doogleby. In the furthermore moonic'pal activities of Bald Wolf, Angelina had as much say as a plate of bean-soup. Yes, sir, them mothers was learned their lesson and they froze to it.

"'Which I opinonate this here Household Art is a real'ty if you doesn't forget the household,' said One-eye Beach, with his mouth full of mince-pie.

"Gospel, Burton, that is," concluded John Heffren, lumbering to his feet.

The foreman considered gravely. "Wait a minute, John," said he. "Take a load of plush and calico and glass-ware with you and dump it in the stove. What's that fancy-work doing on a cattle-ranch?"



"I-I think I would give twenty-nine dollars for it!"

A Bargain in Antiques

BY MICHAEL WHITE

ILLUSTRATED BY WALTER J. ENRIGHT

I.

IT was a coincidence that Mrs. Bixby happened to pass the Emporium Sales-rooms just as Mr. Cramp's resonant voice swept into the street the extraordinary value of the piano he was offering.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he cried with impressive enunciation, "I wish to draw your attention to the fact that this lot is not a cook-stove nor a second-hand ice-chest; but an elegant, full size, concert-grand p-i-a-n-o," he spelled and continued, "pi-anner; genuine rosewood case and elaborately hand-carved trimmin's."

Mr. Cramp paused to observe the effect of his eloquence, which had arrested Mrs. Bixby's steps in the interest of further particulars. In the Bixby's trim little four-room-and-bath-etc., apartment—most suitable in all respects for a young married couple of limited means and an enviable surplus of happiness unto themselves—the only article needful to complete its attractiveness, according to Mrs. Bixby's tasteful judgment, was a

piano. Hence, any likely reference to that instrument engaged her attention immediately.

"And I am positively offered," proceeded Mr. Cramp, with an excellent simulation of a sob in his voice, "twenty-nine dollars—think of it?—for this—as good as new with a drop of varnish and the strings tightened up a bit—Hammer-slaw make—Poliowski endorsed, full grand pi-anner. I wonder," he asked, "if this aint a spirit seance, with me doing the medium stunt—because I can't believe that you, ladies and gentlemen, of high intelligence and with your eyes wide open, are going to stop bidding at twenty-nine dollars."

Mrs. Bixby also began to wonder if a real piano could be purchased for twenty-nine dollars, and entered the sales-room with a mind open to conviction.

"Just touch up the wires again, will you, professor?" Mr. Cramp instructed one of his clerks with amiable pleasantry.

The clerk responded with a few

chords, which demonstrated that a possibility of harmony was still in the possession of the instrument.

"And kindly make a passage for that lady," requested Mr. Cramp, as his keen eye perceived a trace of eagerness on Mrs. Bixby's face. "Step right up and look it over, madam," he invited. "If you want a pi-anner, there's an instrument that'll bear inspection—hall marked Hammerslaw; which I needn't tell you is the favorite of the great *impresario*, Signor Poliwowski. That's the kind of a pi-anner he sings to when getting \$5,000 a clip for handing us out a 'fantazza' through the phonograph. If you doubt my word, madam, just ring up Conreid, or Hammerstein, or Belasco, and ask them if they ever paid less than \$1,500 for a Hammerslaw. The 'phone's right there at your service."

Somewhat impressed by Mr. Cramp's easy handling of notable names and large figures, Mrs. Bixby moved forward, glanced over what was unquestionably a handsome piece of case-work, and then lightly ran her fingers along the keys. If considerably out of tune, they responded well enough to suggest usefulness in not too exacting circumstances. It was certainly worth more than \$29.00. In the spacious salesroom, packed with all manner of heavy weight furniture, the proportions of the piano seemed little beyond the normal. At any rate, that is how it appeared to Mrs. Bixby, surprised in chancing upon such a bargain in the article she chiefly desired at the moment, and with a check for \$50 in her pocketbook to do with as pleased her fancy.

"I—I think I would give twenty-nine dollars for it," ventured Mrs. Bixby.

"Twenty-nine dollars has already been offered, madam," returned Mr. Cramp with his best smile. "Make it thirty and I'll guarantee you'll never miss the extra dollar."

Mrs. Bixby glanced from the auctioneer's bland face to the piano and hesitated.

"And fifty," offered an employee, tipped by a side wink from Mr. Cramp to stimulate the only other bidder's enthusiasm.

"Thank you," bowed Mr. Cramp as if addressing a stranger. "I am now bid twenty-nine dollars and fifty cents for this elegant pi-anner. Make it thirty, madam, and it's still like winning a prize-competition."

Mrs. Bixby shot an angry glance at the man who, she thought, was trying to deprive her of her own, and then lifted her eyes to Mr. Cramp's upraised hammer which quivered as if about to fall.

"Twenty-nine dollars and fifty cents," cried Mr. Cramp, "the last call, ladies and gentlemen—positively the chance of a lifetime going for—"

"Well, I'll give thirty dollars," interposed Mrs. Bixby hastily, "but not a penny more," she added with firmness.

Bang! fell the hammer on the board. It was with inward relief that Mr. Cramp disposed of a "lot" relinquished by the owner, and which, owing to the slight demand for second- or third-hand concert-grand pianos, had been occupying more space in the salesroom than it was worth.

Mrs. Bixby went home in a flutter of conflicting emotions. Until the hammer fell and the piano was actually hers, she hardly realized she had entered the bidding—with such skill and swiftness of action had Mr. Cramp led her up to the climax.

Of course, she wanted a piano, and, regarded merely as an ornament of fine-grain rosewood and carving, the one she had purchased was probably a safe investment at \$30; but when she came to survey her 12x14 parlor, it did seem the piano would occupy more space than she had been given time to reckon upon in the auction-room. Still, she reasoned, that by shifting the furniture around, it might be accommodated for the present, until, in fact, they moved into the larger apartment which she and Mr. Bixby had recently been discussing. She was, therefore, able to greet her husband with a display of confident enthusiasm when he returned from the office.

"Guess, Horace," she cried, "what is coming to-morrow?"

To humor his wife, Mr. Bixby made several ineffectual attempts and then confessed his lack of perception.

"Why, a piano, of course," Mrs. Bixby nodded.

"Oh, you've rented one, then," he remarked, settling himself in the Morris chair, which fitted into the radiator corner so nicely.

"No," she returned, "not rented but bought one; and just think, only thirty dollars at auction."

"Bought a piano for thirty dollars at auction," he repeated. "Why, it must be a—"

"Oh, it's a splendid instrument," she interposed hurriedly, pressing back the doubt which again rose in her mind, "a real Hammerslaw — recommended by Signor Somebody as the best made— Mr. Cramp said so."

"Who's Mr. Cramp?" asked Mr. Bixby.

"Why, the auctioneer," she explained.

"O-oh!" ejaculated Bixby with expressive emphasis. "Well of course, if the auctioneer said so i must be true. But the real question is are you satisfied, Kate?"

"Ye-es—I think—Oh, yes, I'm quite sure I am," she hastened to affirm. "It is a very handsome instrument, though being second-hand it may need a little repair, and is perhaps just a size too large for this apartment; but, you know, you were talking about moving into a larger one, so it will be quite right then."

"Quite right anyway you say, Kate," he yielded readily. "If a \$30 piano satisfies you, I guess I ought not to complain."

This was a relief to Mrs. Bixby, as she had been inclined to fear her husband would more closely question the rashness with which she had invested in the piano.

II.

But the first note of advancing trouble was struck next morning, when two mus-

"Will you please move this thing aside so I can get past?"



cular men descended from the wagon bearing the piano, climbed the five flights of stairs to the Bixby apartment, and thumped on the door.

"Is this here where the pi-anner's for?" asked the spokesman of the two, thrusting into Mrs. Bixby's hand a slip of paper giving directions.

"Yes," she cried eagerly. "I have been expecting you all the morning."

"Couldn't get here any quicker, ma'm," tersely replied the mover.

Then he glanced at the windows and addressed his mate.

"Wonder if we could borrer a steam-derrick, Bill?" he asked reflectively.

Bill swept the ceiling with his eyes and then offered another suggestion.

"Wonder, Sam, if the landlord 'ud have any objection to our cuttin' out a bit of the roof?"

"Why, what do you mean?" demanded Mrs. Bixby.

"Well, it's like this, ma'm," explained

Sam. "I don't see as how we can get a firm hold for the tackle to hoist in a half-ton of music-machinery from the outside—to say nothin' of the landlord raisin' trouble if we tear out the fire escape; and it aint any feather-duster job haulin' that there pi-anner up them nar-er stairs. Guess it can't be done at all," he concluded shaking his head.

"Reckon not, by the looks of it," agreed Bill.

"Oh, what nonsense!" cried Mrs. Bixby with impatient reproach in her voice, "the idea of two great, big, fine, strong men like you hesitating a moment about bringing up a simple piano. You ought to be ashamed to allow a little difficulty like that to influence you."

The two fine, strong men, perhaps flattened by the compliment to their muscular power, exchanged appreciative grins as they turned back to the stairs.

"Well, ma'm," said Sam, "we aint responsible if the plaster is all torn out of the staircase side wall."

"Nor the hand-rail broke all the way up," cheerfully added Bill.

"Don't you dare do anything of the kind," warned Mrs. Bixby with some alarm. "I insist that you are to be most careful and not damage anything."

"All right, ma'm," returned Sam, as he began to climb down the stairs, "then we'll have to take our time about it. Party whose furniture we had to move this afternoon to let another party occupy the flat will have to fix things up the best way they can. If there's any kick comin', guess you'll make it O.K. with the boss."

Thus, with the matter of time eliminated, the two strong men proceeded with easy deliberation, to remove the piano from the wagon to the sidewalk. Then, as it became clear that a third hand was needed to tackle the job, Sam waited with exemplary patience while Bill went back to the shop for assistance. Finally, when the third strong man arrived, by a united effort the piano was borne into the hall and up one flight of stairs, where it stood peak uppermost like a crag of the Matterhorn defying a passage to anyone. Just then the shrill blast of a factory whistle proclaimed the noon recess from

labor for refreshment. Promptly the three strong men released their respective holds on the piano.

"Aint that the signal for the hosses to have their lunch?" asked Bill.

"Sure," agreed Sam, "them poor beasts work as hard for their victuals as the rest of us."

Thus humanely inspired, the three strong men relinquished their tasks, and having tied nose-bags under the sun-bonnets of the horses, sought a sheltering angle to smoke the pipe of peace and comfort.

But very soon the atmosphere of the Bixby apartment-house became charged with a reverse current. Tenants downward bound found their progress completely barred at the first floor by the beetling crag of the Bixbys' piano, while those climbing upward hurled loud complaints over the insurmountable summit.

"Will you please move this thing aside so as I can get past?" politely appealed a stout lady hurrying up with packages for lunch, to the gas-collector marooned on the other side.

"Would be glad to oblige you, ma'm, if I was an elephant," replied the gas-collector; "but who's responsible for this old bus being left here anyway?" he demanded with impatience.

"It's an outrage!"

"Call the janitor."

So the janitor was summoned. The janitor, who was taking his lunch in the basement, leisurely finished a cup of coffee, and then appeared to investigate the trouble. On the whole, he proved unsympathetic. As he was inclined to be at peace with all the world except tenants, he advised the excited group to take a little exercise by climbing over the roof and up or down the stairs of the adjoining apartment-house. Then to show there was no ill-feeling between himself and the piano-movers, he went out and distributed cigars given him by the tenants.

But, in the meantime, it would seem that the piano-movers had experienced a pricking of conscience.

"It aint right, is it, Bill," asked Sam between whiffs, "to leave that famerly over there on 171st Street waitin' to have their furniture moved?"

"Sure it aint," grunted Bill approvingly.

"Guess I'll tell the loidy here," remarked Sam, "that we'll go over there and finish up that job first. This here pianner can wait."

"Sure it can," agreed Bill.

Thereupon Sam went in and disclosed his plan through the speaking-tube to the already much perturbed Mrs. Bixby.

dignant determination not to be treated in such fashion.

"How dare you even think of leaving my piano blocking the stairs in this way?" she flashed upon them. "Carry it up at once—at once—I insist," she urged in a manner that completely vanquished the three strong men.

"Oh, well, ma'm," apologized Sam, "we didn't intend any inconvenience to



"We'll be back along about four o'clock sure, ma'm," he concluded.

Mrs. Bixby had been much harassed in distributing the parlor-furniture so as to make room for the piano—the dimensions of which now loomed appalling—and was also disturbed by the unfriendly remarks of other tenants passing her door to gain the roof and the adjoining apartment-house exit. She, therefore, did not stay to protest through the tube, but gathering her skirts together, followed the procession across the roof, and swept down upon the three strong men with in-

you, but was thinking of the other loidy on 171st Street."

"Well, it's your duty to attend to this lady first," replied Mrs. Bixby, calming somewhat as she perceived she was gaining her point. "Don't you see how you are inconveniencing everybody here?" she added in a tone of reproach.

"Sure, ma'm," acquiesced Sam, "that's right. Come on, boys," he summoned his assistants, "it aint our fault the other loidy's got to wait."

The three strong men thus again moved to the assault.

"Guess it'll be quite a job to fit the panner in once we get it up there," ventured Sam, as he bent his back to the task.

"Now then, boys, ugh she goes."

The three strong men cracked their muscles, the huge instrument toppled on its base, the staircase groaned, crash went a side window, scattering a shower of glass splinters into the air-shaft, and the piano was hoisted up three steps.

Thus, with wall-paper torn off in long strips, scraping of woodwork, and jolts as if from an earthquake, Mrs. Bixby's piano was hauled slowly—very slowly upward. Once or twice it seemed as if the monster instrument was about to crash downward, carrying destruction of everything, into the basement, but the three strong men proved their endurance and finally set it up on the fifth landing.

"Gee but that was the toughest job I ever tackled," exclaimed Sam mopping his brow.

"Sure," agreed Bill.

"That's what," echoed the third man sympathetically.

"Don't see how we're ever goin' to get it through that hall of yours, ma'm," remarked Sam with renewed faltering of heart.

But Mrs. Bixby was keyed up to overcome any suggested obstacle. She again stirred the three strong men to action, so that by hauling and backing, twisting an inch or two this way, and screwing the peak around projecting cornices, the piano was at last borne triumphantly into the parlor, where, when it was set up on its three legs, there didn't seem much room for anything else, as Sam remarked on departing.

The piano was the parlor.

Mrs. Bixby, surveying the expanse of polished wood surface from a corner, experienced, then, the reaction.

"Oh, I wonder what we are going to do with it?" she gasped. "Whatever will Horace say when he sees that piano?"

The mystery of the bargain-price of thirty dollars was manifest. Few were the New Yorkers with room to give a concert-grand piano, which at second-hand, therefore, fell upon a dearth of purchasers.

A visit from the landlord interrupted these harassing reflections. With cold politeness he itemized the damage done to the staircase—two broken windows, rents in carpet, holes in plaster, rail cracked in several places.

"I'm afraid you will have to see Mr. Bixby about it," she faltered.

"I certainly shall, madam," he replied tersely, "and will expect him to make the damage good."

It was, therefore, with some nervous tension that she heard the latch turn as, an hour later, Mr. Bixby paused outside.

"Oh, Horace," she cried, in her anxiety to meet him squeezing past the angle of the piano, which projected nearly into the hall, "you can't imagine what has happened?"

"Looks as if there had been a raid of some kind," he remarked.

"But see—see," she cried, with a touch of dramatic effect pointing to the piano.

Mr. Bixby stared in plain bewilderment.

"Well, Kate," he exclaimed as if trying to grasp the situation, "you certainly did get your thirty dollars' worth of lumber. Great Scott! it is a whopper."

"Yes, but how are we going to live with it? What are we going to do with it?" she besought him.

"Can't imagine," he replied reflectively, "though it seems to me it's up to you to answer that question, Kate. But brace up—" he began to laugh reassuringly as he caught a liquid glisten in her eyes—"if the wires are all right we can take the lid off and perhaps save buying another bed for your aunt when she comes. Anyway, let's go down-town to dinner and try and think it out afterwards; we can't deny things are a bit crowded here now."

This was the first of many discussions the Bixbys engaged in over the piano. In fact, it entered with such obtrusiveness into their domestic affairs—overwhelming every effort made to conform it with surroundings—that they came to talk of little else. As a result of these deliberations, they were reluctantly compelled to admit its uselessness, because there was no room to sit or stand between the keyboard and the wall. It was, moreover, not

exactly ornamental, occupying, as it did, nearly the whole parlor to the dislodgement of every other article; while its little worth, generally, was made apparent when offered to friends as a gift and gratefully declined. Moreover, considering the circumstances attending its advent, they hesitated to move with it to another apartment-house. It really seemed as if the only way to rid themselves of such a white elephant would be to fly from it, leaving the landlord to wrestle with the problem.

III.

And then Mr. Bixby made the acquaintance of Jenks!

It appeared that Jenks was a man with a hobby—that excellent antidote to overstrained nerves—and in his case it took the form of tinkering with cabinet-work. In fact, Jenks prided himself on being able to fashion a useful and attractive article out of any old bit of furniture, with a special eye to the antique. When, therefore, Bixby took Jenks into his confidence concerning the piano, Jenks gladly

offered his services as an expert in just such emergencies. So Jenks came, and halting on the threshold of the parlor, for a moment seemed to be lost in an ecstasy of delight.

"Beautiful—beautiful," he murmured.

Then, moving forward, as if approaching an object of worship, he passed his hand over the polished surface of the case with almost a loving touch.

"Simply exquisite," he exclaimed.

The Bixbys stared at each other with eyes of wonder.

"Mrs. Bixby," he said turning toward her, "I congratulate you—you possess a treasure."

"Oh dear me," she sighed, "I'm sure I wish I could see it that way."

Jenks laughed lightly, as if Mrs. Bixby's note of despair could not possibly have been touched in earnest.

"Of course you don't mean that," he returned. "Such a specimen of rosewood—such carving! Great heavens, think of what can be made out of such material—a charming sideboard—an occasional table—a perfect antique china-cabinet."

"Or a bed for Aunt Martha," lightly interposed Bixby. "Remember, I suggested that."

"Horace, don't be ridiculous," reproved Mrs. Bixby, now beginning to see undreamed of possibilities in the piano, and with quite a liking for Mr. Jenks. "Do you really think, Mr. Jenks," she asked in her nicest manner, "that something like that could be made out of the piano?—I mean the antique china-cabinet, because I would just give the world for one."

"You need give nothing at all for one," he replied with enthusiasm. "It is already here elementally; permit me to be the magician to produce it in actual form—at least to assist you in so doing."

"Oh, Mr. Jenks if you would be so kind," she appealed gratefully.

"The pleasure shall be mine." He smiled at the thought of displaying the skill of his hands in the interest of such a distinctly attractive woman as Mrs. Bixby.

This plan mutually agreed upon, the three were eager to put it into immediate execution.



Sam disclosed his plan
to Mrs. Bixby

At the outset, the breaking up of the piano proved more heroic work than Jenks had anticipated—old fashioned bolts and rivets tightened with rust have a way of resisting a process of dismemberment. But at last the likely wood was separated from the goodly pile of scrap, and a workshop for further operations was set up in the kitchen. There, for many an odd winter-evening the Bixbys, under the direction of Jenks, sawed, cut, fitted, and glued in accordance with the pattern of an antique china-cabinet. If, as Mr. Bixby hinted, the soup from the workshop savored of varnish, and the morning biscuits somehow conveyed the suggestion of sawdust, what mattered it so long as the hateful piano became a memory and an elegant china-cabinet visibly took its place?

It was at Mrs. Bixby's suggestion that genuine old brass fittings, procured at a nearby junk-shop, were used in the finishing, to which Jenks added a few masterful touches to complete the illusion of antiquity. Finally the glass panels were inserted, and Mrs. Bixby gave a little dinner in honor of Mr. Jenks and the cabinet. At this, such was the chorus of praise and pleasure derived from the manifestly successful achievement, that the Bixby's might have plunged headlong into Jenks's hobby, but for a sudden change in their fortune.

IV.

Mr. Bixby was promoted to fill the managership of the Mexican branch of his firm's business in an emergency.

"We shall have to pack up and start right away," he announced to his wife.

"And how about our furniture?" she asked.

"Well, what with freight and duty it wouldn't pay to ship it with us, and it's hardly valuable enough to store. I guess we'd better send it over to Cramp's for sale."

"To Cramp's?" questioned Mrs. Bixby. "That horrid man who sold me—"

"That's just the reason why Cramp is the man," argued Mr. Bixby. "If he was horrid enough to sell to you, he ought to

be good enough to sell for you. He's evidently a smart seller anyway."

So the Bixby's separated the few portable articles destined for Mexico, reaching at last the regretful decision that, as the china-cabinet was a heavy piece of furniture, for which Jenks could not find house-room, it must go with the rest to the auction-rooms.

At first Mrs. Bixby had wisely decided not to attend the sale of their household effects, but when the day came she was drawn to Cramp's magnetically. It would have been better perhaps had she remained away. To the sentimental pain of parting with treasured articles, was added the sting of witnessing lot after lot "knocked down" by Mr. Cramp for a mere song. Almost heart-broken and on the verge of tears, Mrs. Bixby was about to retreat when she was restrained by a special appeal from the auctioneer.

"Now, ladies and gentlemen," he said leaning over his pulpit, "I am about to offer you a gem—a genuine antic china-cabinet."

Mrs. Bixby saw the cabinet rolled forward with divided interest—regret and sudden curiosity.

"A rare bit of rosewood cabinet-work—a hundred and fifty years old if it's a day," continued Mr. Cramp. "Just examine the worm holes if you don't believe me."

Mrs. Bixby gasped with astonishment.

"Now, ladies and gentlemen," proceeded Mr. Cramp, with great impressiveness, "with your kind permission we'll start the bidding at one hundred dollars on the chance of possessing a treasure, which, I understand, has come right straight down to the present owner from a great-great-grandmother."

"Oh!" gasped Mrs. Bixby as she clutched a chair for support.

"And twenty," promptly offered a bidder, before Mrs. Bixby could interpose to deny the statement about her great-great-grandmother.

"And twenty, thank you," acknowledged Mr. Cramp.

"Forty."

"Sixty."

"Thank you, one hundred and sixty

dollars I am offered for this Sherriton make, elegant rosewood, antic china-cabinet."

"Eighty."

Two gentlemen, obviously connoisseurs if one might judge from their side-whiskers and general air of well being, carefully inspected the "lot." Mrs. Bixby moved closer to them. She was able to catch a phrase, half a sentence, a word, as: "unquestionably," "fine specimen," "fairly unique." And then, the elder of the two connoisseurs caught the eye of the auctioneer and announced:

"Two hundred."

At two hundred and fifty there was a slight pause, but stimulated again by Mr. Cramp's persuasive eloquence it climbed by tens and fives to two ninety.

At three hundred dollars the hammer fell upon what Mr. Cramp declared to be the greatest bargain ever "knocked down" in his salesroom.

The elderly connoisseur, finding himself the owner of the "lot," clawed his side-whiskers and beamed.

Mrs. Bixby wandered out of the store feeling conscious of an utter unreality in things. She sped three blocks in the wrong direction; then suddenly realizing her mistake ran to a public telephone.

"Oh, Horace—Horace," she cried over the wire, "what do you think has happened?"

"Have you bought another piano?" Came back to her.

"N-no," she laughed nervously, "but the cabinet—the cabinet, Horace!"

"Well, what about the cabinet?"

"Why, it's been sold for three hundred dollars. Come home as soon as you can or I shall spend all the money—or faint."

"No—no!" gasped Bixby, "don't do that! Let me!"

And he did.



With the Aid of The Prophetess

BY HENRY OYEN

Author of "The Uplifting of Sophia," etc

MY highly improper friend Steven, and myself, were taking the regular evening holiday of the Ninety Per Cent who can't get away for the hot weather. Before the orientally-draped concession of the Princess Duhvatsky, who is a seventh dotter of a seventh dotter, a veiled mysteree of the mystereous Hindooostan, who reads you' palm and tells you' past, present, and future, Steven stopped, condemned himself, and resolutely dragged me toward the near-porphry portals. The crowd, the most mucilaginous of compositions, strove its worst to hold us for its own on its surging way toward the Destruction of Johnstown. But the arm of Steven was strong, and my coat-sleeve was likewise; and presently we found ourselves free of the press—as back-water is free from the torrent whence it is flung—and a moment later we stood, covered, in the presence of the Princess Duhvatsky.

"Never," said Steven, solemnly, "so long as the graft holds out to burn other people for the benefit of Stevie, will I pass up one of these old girls without letting her get to me for the price of her performance. Lend me a dollar, brother, that I may properly patronize the Princess. Princess, read ahead, and may your days be long and ever palmy."

Swift retribution followed upon Steven's outrage; for it befell that he discovered he had recently suffered sorely in a distressing love-affair with a blonde woman; but he should not give way to despair: his lines indicated that some day he would have money; and he must be careful, for he was simple-minded and apt to trust tall dark strangers, or somebody would swindle him out of his wealth ere he had had the chance to spend it for himself.

"But why palmists?" I asked, when we were seated at a table in the Casino.

"Because," replied Steven, casually directing my attention to an idle waiter, "I'm principled that way. It's one of the basic articles of my constitution; not a habit, you will comprehend, but a principle. Palmistry ladies and myself have a bond in common. They want to get my coin; I want them to get it. They yearn for the privilege of gazing into my manly fist at four bits a gaze; I yearn to have the four bits—or a friend who's got it—to give 'em. Strange but true. 'And for why?' you ask next. Because of once upon a time, brother, when the lining to my little cloud had turned out to be of the German silver variety; when all the coin of the realm was locked up in the strong-boxes of the enemy, with the keys thrown away; a time, sir, when the era of prosperity was of as much use to me as a soul to an alley-goat; when I was thoroughly and sufficiently broke, and—and because of one Madame Flor Es Sence, uncrowned queen of the palmistry and seeress game, and peerless savioress of the fortunes of the gent whose thirst you are about to assuage.

"I was out in Iowa then, selling accident-insurance. Never mind; I was young in those days—blushingly young; I have grown up since. Now I know better. But how could you expect an innocent, uneducated youth of absolutely no regular experience to know that the insurance-business wasn't all that the policy-holders thought it to be? Besides, I'd lost my real estate and town-site grip out in Kansas in one of their justly celebrated cyclones—it picked up and carried away every last sheet of blue prints and maps that I had to my name—and

all I possessed as an available asset was my commission as agent for the Confidential Accident Insurance Company. What could I do? I couldn't set up in the real estate business again, for I was broke, and blue prints come high. I couldn't get into politics, for I was too young to have whiskers. So there you are; nothing for me to do but to journey over into the corn-belt and try to replenish the treasury by selling Little Gem accident-policies.

"Being an absolute stranger within the gates of that parish, I wasn't aware of the fact that that part of Iowa was no place for me so long as I was doing nothing worse than trying to sell accident-insurance. Had I been otherwise engaged—had I been dealing in beautifully gilded gold bricks, or acting as superintendent of a three-ring shell-game, or handling a patent tooth-grower, all would have been well with me. But I wasn't trying to rob 'em. I was dealing in a strictly legitimate and fair, hundred-cents-on-the-dollar, line of accident-insurance, and naturally I fell down hard. I had the wrong goods. The brick and the disappearing pea were staples. Fifty years of county fairs had put them on the market, whereas, A1 accident-insurance, not having such prestige, was a drug.

"They'd been getting along without it in some way or other before I discovered their pitiful state, and they seemed to imagine that somehow they'd manage to worry along without it in the future. Yes, indeed. They even heard the fell announcement that I couldn't afford to spend more than a week in their midst, without a quiver. In fact, they acted as if they didn't care whether I stayed at all—with a single exception. That exception was one Keokwa landlord. He wanted me to stay—after I'd been residing with him for a few days—watched me with the eye of a brother who hasn't got a meal-ticket, and wouldn't let me escape him.

"Took pains to entertain me, too. Used to tell stories about how he'd put a young feller about my size in jail for jumping his board-bill, and how there hadn't

a soul beat him out of a cent in five long years. Before meals he did that. After them he'd sit and glare at me till I felt the milk of human kindness curdle and turn to whey within me. And he was a pretty ripe example of the kind of people I was trying to insure against accidents—people who sat up all night with shot-guns to see that the accident happened to the other fellow!

"I'd drive forty-four miles through a cornfield and hook up in front of a palatial rural mansion and proceed to enlighten the bucolic brother on the appalling chances, that he ran each and every day of his existence, of being killed or maimed for life. I'd quote 'em statistics—right out of a printed book, too—that proved to the last whisper that the average American citizen managed to go through one day of life without suffering a severe accident merely because of the luck that plays on the side of all fools, and that sooner or later the percentage was going to get every last mother's son of us. I'd prove, so that it would have been a shame to question it, brother, that there was no chance for 'em to go through another week without losing a leg, or an arm, or something else that they needed in their everyday business; and I'd convince 'em down to the ground that I was there merely for the purpose of making that accident pay. Did it kill 'em? Not so you could notice how natural they looked. Kill 'em! Why, say, it didn't even interfere with their proper breathing.

"Think I'll git my ribs busted in by a hoss before nixt Thu'sday, eh? Well, let 'er rip, durn it."

"No, they didn't want any protection. They'd been losing their fingers in mowers, and arms in threshers, and eyes on the Fourth so long that they'd got used to it. Get paid for it? Naw; what was a little thing like an arm, anyhow? Even—even I could not induce them to take a chance on losing a reputation when they went to the next annual street-fair.

"And now, now when we begin to talk about street-fairs we begin to draw near to the action of the piece. Yessir. The orchestra is starting the swift music, the

people are forgetting their bonbons, and the asbestos curtain is about to rise. For it was because of the fact that they can't get along out there without one yearly visit from the Bosco-merry-go-round-high-diver people that I met the peerless Madame Flor Es Sence, Queen of Palmistry, the lady who taught me to love all palmists.

"The fair-outfit she'd been traveling with had found the streets of Keokwa hard sledding. They had a bad one for a high-diver. Somebody had sneaked him a bottle one day when his keeper was asleep at the switch; a little screw-eyed up on the take-off that night, and, booh! horrified free-house as Mr. High Diver comes down side-ways and smashes a shoulder on the side of the tank. Mr. Manager was all business. He made a lightning calculation of how much it would cost to have Mr. H. D. patched up—the contract read that way it seems—and faded away into the dark night, and there you have it: the troupe scattering for their home as well as their circumstances and friendly brakemen would allow, and Madame F. E. S. cast high and dry on the hostile stones of Keokwa, with a trunk full of exhibit kimonas and a roll of hand charts.

"These highly exciting doings had come off about a week before our auras got tangled, and *Madame* was still there. The eagle-eyed landlord was watching her trunk with the same zealous care that he bestowed upon my person, and *Madame* had strange scruples about going away and leaving it, as she was reading the palms of the citizens of Keokwa in the hotel cigar-store free with every purchase of a dollar or more, at a salary that just equalled her board-rate per week.

"In those days, brother, I was one of The Order, and I knew the high-signs, grips, and passwords without seeing 'em. Talk about Free Masonry, or Highbinders! You don't know anything about the spirit or value of brotherhood until you're a stranded insurance-agent in a hostile corn-belt and meet up with a snappy little lady who's reading palms for her board and who's taken the thirty-

third degree in being broke, the same as you.

"'Madame,' I said at the first glimpse, 'you've got the call on me. Say the word and there'll be highway-robbery committed in this neighborhood with the object of getting money enough to take you back to the bright lights where you belong.'

"'It isn't the price of a fare that's got me crippled,' said *Madame*. 'I could get that, I s'pose. It's my trunk. They've got it padlocked to the wall in the sample-room and they watch it something fierce.'

"'I might slay a guard or two and commit burglary,' I suggested.

"'Coarse work,' says she. 'Now, look here: two of us against the town of Keokwa. What do you think.'

"'Two of us ought to be able to pry it open a little bit, *Madame*,' I thought.

"'Of course. Now run away while I tell this dollar-customer from the stogie-counter that he's in danger of sudden death, and come back and inform me that you've got a bee-yutiful idea.'

"So obedient Stevie did the messenger-boy imitation around the block. But did you ever notice that you can't manufacture inspiration? Oh, that way, I know; yes, have him make me another one.

"'*Madame*, I didn't get it,' I confessed when she'd read the stogie.

"'H'm!' says *Madame*. She twisted her back hair for a half second; she moved that way, did Madame F. E. S., slow, like a Krag-Jorgenson bullet.

"'H'm. There ought to be an idea around somewhere,' says she. 'Here I'm—Say, you said you were selling accident-insurance, didn't you? H'm. And I'm reading palms. Insurance against accidents—and I've got quite a rep. in this man's town as a prophetess, so—'

"Then we sat up straight and looked at each other.

"There was most certainly no need for any words, no need for explanations, no need for discussion; just simply: 'I'm a prophetess, and you sell accident-insurance.' I understood, *Madame* understood; nothing more to be desired.

"'Ho-hum,' said *Madame*, fussing some more with the back hair, 'I'll sleep to-night for the first time in a week.'

"'Ho-hum,' said I, 'I wont. This thing is too good to sleep over. I'm going to sit up all night and congratulate myself. And, *Madame*, I suggest that we see the Mayor of Keokwa first.'

"'To-morrow at ten,' said *Madame*. 'I'm always in good form at ten.'

"During the interim I muck-raked around a trifle and discovered that on the morrow Hizzoner was going to take the night train for St. Louis; that a week from that date he was billed for a speech at the K. P. convention, and that at his home the carpenters were tearing things up, putting a second story on the front.

"'Right into our hands,' warbled *Madame*, when she heard the returns. 'My trunk is as good as in the baggage-coach ahead at this minute.'

"Mysterious? Well, you're getting dope about a prophetess; why wouldn't it be mysterious?

"At ten in the morning, *Madame*—not in the palm-temple outfit, but in her human-nature clothes—broke into the mayor's office and made him sit up.

"'I—I have a message for you,' says she. The mayor is one of those bush-league foxy-grandpa's. 'Paid or collect?' he says.

"'Not an earthly message, sir;' said *Madame*, 'not a message from this mundane sphere, but from the world of spirits.'

"Then, slap goes her hand against her alabaster brow, and the trance-medium expression comes into her eyes.

"'Headache?' said the mayor.

"'No, no, no! Your Honor, I am a trance-medium, as you may know. Last night I had a vision.'

"'Stomach out of order. I have 'em, too.'

"'A vision—a vision in which you appeared.'

"'Vision of local politics, eh?' harps Hizzoner.

"'No, ah no, alas! No! Of something much more vital to you than mere politics.'

"'Bank going to fail?'

"'No, no, no! Jest not, sir, I pray you, jest not. This is a matter which concerns your very life. I ask you for no

money; I seek no reward. I merely do my duty by warning you of what I have seen; so kindly hear me out.'

"The mayor has shed some of his blithesomeness by this time, you'll understand. When a snappy little lady comes into your office like that and starts to warn you about your future for nothing you're pretty apt to give ear.

"'You mean I'm in danger?' croaks Mr. Mayor.

"*Madame F. E. S.* waves her hands. 'Ah—h! I see—ah—h, ah—h! I see so many things—many things—many things, ah—h! Oh, stop, stop, stop! What is this? Ah, cuhses upon this cuhshed gift of sighting into the future. Take away your gift, you cuhshed fiends, take it away, away, away, I say! and stop me from seeing what is in store for this poor fellow mortal.'

"Mr. Honorable The Mayor of Keokwa is now looking up as cheerful as an alley-dog in the rain, twisting his toes into the springs of the mayoralty chair, and wetting his lips with his tongue, like a stranded carp.

"'Wha—ah—at?' he gasps.

"'Oh, I see your visage, sir.'

"'In what sort of shape?'

"'Nay, nay, sir; ask me not. I pray you, ask me not. I—oh—ahh!'

"'Go on,' says Hizzoner, taking a long breath, 'tell me the worst!'

"'Well, then: I see a long, long train of cars—'

"'The night-train to St. Louis.'

"'I see smoke, and fire, and disaster—ah! a wreck.'

"'I'll pass that trip up,' says the gent.

"'Time passes.' (*Madame* brushes the time along with a supple, white hand.) 'Time passes, and I see a great multitude of people. They are assembled closely together, and they wear a strange insignia upon their breasts—No, no; it is a familiar emblem. I see the letter K—'

"'K. P. pins,' says he. 'Go on.'

"'I see a structure raised above the crowd. It is of boards. There is a flag draped upon it.'

"'Speaking platform.'

"'A tall man of noble mien is standing upon this structure addressing the multitude.'

"That's me."

"I see—I hear a sudden wail from the multitude. Ahh—horrors! The platform has collapsed and the tall man of noble mien is a shattered—'

"Stop! Stop for the love of Heaven!" groans the mayor.

"No, no; ah, no! I must go on," says *Madame* in the trance-voice. "I see a palatial residence. There are signs of disorder about it. It is being torn down; ah, no! It is being increased in size."

"My house!"

"I—ah—h!—I see more disorder more disaster."

"Nothing but," says he.

"I see a room full of broken and torn boards and things. A man is under it all—'

"It's me," says Hizzoner, jumping out of his chair. "It's me. You needn't go any further. It aint anybody else. I'm under that stuff. I feel it in my bones. I have felt it for days. Ah, woe is me! Accidents have got me! They're all around. I've got no chance to escape. What shall I do? What shall I do?"

"While he was wringing his hands *Madame*, having delivered the goods, so to speak, makes her polite exit; and after a decent period has elapsed—but not too long, you understand—whom do you suspect of being the next individual to meet Hizzoner, the mayor, face to face? Who in all this wide, wide world ought to meet a man right after he's discovered that the subsequent steps of his life are built on the fractured shin-bone principle? Who but a man carrying a complete and first class line of accident-insurance; who, indeed, but little Stevie!

"Yes; it was me. 'Yerroner, while I hardly expect to interest you directly in this brand new, high class, E-Pleurisy-Unum line of accident-insurance which I have the honor to be commissioned to write, my company, being the richest and most firmly established in the world, pays me a munificent salary for introducing to the leading men of the country our system of accident-insurance; so it is necessary to the complete fulfillment of my duty that I call upon you and beg for the privilege of taking up

five minutes of your valuable time while I explain to you how it is possible for the Confidential Insurance Company to make it impossible for a man to suffer any accident, of any kind, degree, shape or manner without benefiting therefrom in a manner highly beneficial to the status of his finances."

"He was cooling down gradually as I talked. By the time I'd got down to 'finances' he was only taking hair out of his whiskers.

"D'you mean that you insure people against accidents?" he asked between handfuls.

"That and naught else, Yerroner," I replied.

"Whereupon the Mayor of Keokwa retired to his desk, threw down the bars to his checking-account at the Corn Growers' National, and said, 'Walk into it, thou Steven,' or words to that effect.

"And in I did stroll—I certainly rambled some. Oh, hum; those happy, happy days! When shall we—But, anyhow, I did my best to protect the mayor of Keokwa. He wanted to be protected, wanted it bad.

"I took care of him. I insured that man in a way that probably never has been equaled before or since. I insured him from the bald spot on top, to his new half-soles; from the front of his manly bosom to the bumps of his spinal column, from one finger-tip stretched out against the wall, over to the other. Up and down, crossways, sideways, backward and forward, coming and going—there was no place that I didn't stick a policy on that man; I insured him against everything that could happen to a republican mayor, from populists with bombs in their whiskers to blood poisoning from a rusty razor; from the wrath of the elements to carbuncles; from anything you please to everything else. Insured? Why, when I got through with that man you couldn't throw him down-stairs without making him independently rich!"

"I've got to confess that I scared myself a little. I never knew until then just how many things there are that can happen to a common, every-day citizen that he ought to be insured. It was

appalling when I began to dope out the list.

"By the time I had it complete I was wondering why I wasn't a life inmate of The Helpless Cripple's Ward. There is such a thing as too much imagination, I will say that. But after I had made it complete, my policies were of the sort that go into instant operation, so it was necessary for me to harvest the premium at once—there was nothing to do but sit back and pray that Hizzoner wouldn't drop dead before he got the check signed.

"And after that, it was me on the trail of *Madame*, for we'd marked two other prominent citizens for that same morning.

"There were seven of these prom. cits. available for our stunt in that town and it took three days to complete the work of protecting them from disaster. By that time *Madame* had her trunk out of hock, a ticket to Fourteenth street in her handbag, and a smile in her eyes. And to get even with the solicitous landlord, Steven was strolling around the hotel-office displaying much wealth and intimating that it wouldn't be a bad investment to start a real hotel in that town and put the fogey boarding-house keepers out of business. Revenge is sweet—especially with a country landlord at the receiving end, and I took it out to the last word.

Then I hunted up *Madame*.

"'Madame F. E. S.,' I said in my human tone of voice, 'it's been *Madame* up to now, but s'pose you give me a whisper of, not your real name, of course, but what you want to be called back of the scenes.'

"But *Madame* didn't respond, either way. I continued merrily.

"'I am going to New York in the morning, *Madame*. Why can't this work be carried on and continued in that great and verdant metropolis?'

"It seemed to me I had got into the

habit of having visions myself. They included a fancy flat, with near-leather Turkish chairs, meals on time nearly every day, and a pair of laughing eyes to welcome me on my tired return from the busy marts down town. For the only difference between Keowka and little old New York is that New York is easier. So Why can't it *Madame*? I repeated.

"Then Madame F. E. S. spoke. 'Because,' says she firmly, but not gently, 'my real name is Mrs. Timothy Carroll. Because I am going to New York on the morning-train, myself; because I am going alone; because Mr. Carroll is just through with his weight-lifting stunt out on the western circuit and will be at the station to meet me. Because I've managed to pull down enough in this game to even up on the fair-loss, and because I'm sick of the whole works for this season, anyhow, and I want to get back to my kids on McDougall street and dress 'em up in the new clothes I made for 'em during spare hours, and play with 'em, and live—until next season.'

"Now, that did hypnotize me, but I had one ray of intelligence left, and it flashed a glimmer that made me gasp.

"'*Madame*,' I said with my hat off, 'tell me, where are the kids' new clothes stowed?'

"'In the trunk, of course,' she says. 'If they hadn't been I wouldn't have stayed with it, and you'd never have met me, and you'd be broke yet, and—'

"'Lucky for me that you've got them kids,' I chirped. 'I—'

"'Yes,' she snapped, 'lucky for you. But not half so lucky as it is for me. Good-by.'

"That's all. Quick curtain. I never saw her again.

"And now, let me take another dollar and I'll go back to the Princess Duhvatsky and have her tell me to look out for a dark man who's making eyes at the wife of my heart—which I haven't met yet."



Lee Clayburgh—Quitter

BY LARRY EVANS

ILLUSTRATED BY D. J. LAVIN

IT was the day before the playing off of the final round of the tournament for "Mixed Foursomes," the last match on the club-calendar for the year, and the links which stretched away in front of the club-house—a shimmering green and mottled brown in the sod-baking sun—were thickly dotted with swinging, perspiring figures limbering up their game for the coming match.

The men murmured, eloquently and impartially, at fozzle and the mercury, alike, whenever location permitted; and the women uttered soul-felt, under-their-breath prayers for a change of wind and temperature on the morrow.

For weeks the coming event had cast its shadow before, and now, on the day preceding its scheduled arrival, the lion's

share of that same shadow seemed to sit squarely and in ill-becoming gloom on the lean, sun-tanned features of Lee Clayburgh.

Throughout the long, hot afternoon he had dodged ingeniously, or refused with almost curt abruptness, that was entirely alien to his usual ready acquiescence, the noisy challenges of the brilliantly scintillating groups that came troup ing out from the lockers, to make a fourth on the links or courts, and had ensconced himself under the shadow of the red and white awning to murder, by degrees, his own peace of mind.

It was the one niche in the broad, weathered-in-the-rough veranda of the Green Brook Country Club-house that escaped invasion by each fresh group of

golfers—hilariously comparing score-cards and wagering golf-balls, regardless—and he held it serenely, in the face of the very patent invitations and studied intrusions of several couples just in from the links, who realized that seclusion shared by two was far more consciously sane than this apparently morbid self-burial of an individual.

Clayburgh only stretched his six feet of long waisted, long limbed muscle to one greater degree of uneasy laziness on the wicker divan, and smiled in unprovoked, vindictive delight, as they retreated in excellent order and with undisguised pity for his density. Disgust—disgust deep and profound—sat thick upon him, and the six feet of sinew aforementioned was one of the sore spots—half the offending raw edge of all the trouble.

Just one week before, the last matches for the "Supremacy Trophy" had been played off, through the heaviest list of entries of the year. It was far and away the most important in the schedule for the entire season, and with the cup went the club-title of championship to the winner.

Throughout the qualifying round and the long weeding-out process that followed, Clayburgh had played his usual inimitable game. It was a game that was veritably a part of himself—a devil-may-care sort, loose swinging, unhampered. Time and again, he put the ball into the cup, in a long, arrowlike sweep, when "down" in one stroke meant the winning of the hole. Time and again, he got away long, low slashing drives that made the fluttering "gallery" forget their golf-etiquette and gasp and remark, audibly. His game typified the highest exponent of the spectacular, and the larger share of the spectators were following his work.

Up to the final match it continued, and then there came a quick, intangible illable-to-be-defined sort of a change; and the "gallery," with nerves taut, and keenly sensitive with expectancy, felt its coming as consciously as did Clayburgh himself.

Drives that before had swept away from the tee with the free dip of a swal-

low, now pulled miserably into the long "rough" that edged the sides of the course. Putts that had "gone down" without the slightest chance of mischance, rimmed the edge of the cup and hung back, with heart-breaking coquetry, at the cost of another stroke. First, his game suffered from a surfeit of care; then, a moment later, from a wretched overchancing; and the cup went to Spencer, the champion of three years' standing, in just such a miserable fluke of a final match with Clayburgh as had been the unvaried rule in the seasons previous.

Spencer played a machine-like game; no heart, no nerve in it. It seemed but the moving of an unthinking, well-oiled mechanism; and yet he had never crossed clubs with Clayburgh but that he had won out, eventually, over the golfer who was conceded to be, by far, the superior player. And it was not because Spencer purposely "got on the nerves" of his opponent, for Ralph Spencer was too thorough a sportsman to play a game that savored, in the slightest, of anything that could be stigmatized "dirty." He himself would have chosen a little faster match to cap the climax of the day's play, instead of such an utter fizzle.

The club-members themselves, from those who were golfers of no mean ability, to those whose entire grasp on the game lay in a healthily developed vocabulary, had come to expect this going to pieces of Clayburgh's final match as a foregone conclusion; it had occurred with such unfailing regularity, in the last few years.

"He gets yellow! He loses his nerve! There isn't any steel in him for an uphill fight!" And dozens of other and similar were the remarks the members of the "gallery" vouchsafed each other, on the walk back to the club-house in the dusk, at the end of the day's play. And yet they were all meant more in sympathy and disappointment than condemnation, for Clayburgh was, by far, much more than a come-and-go sort of a favorite.

"The boy loses himself: he doesn't seem to know his own ability well enough to come up to the scratch, at a pinch, with the best that is in him," said old Silvanus, himself a veteran of the links, as

he was sipping Scotch, later, in the café.

"Just where the hard, uphill work comes in he quits his big game for that little two-for-a-cent one that isn't even half his best."

The defeat always cut the old veteran far more deeply than it did even Clayburgh himself, for he had made, and put into Clayburgh's hands, the first driver that he had ever swung.

To Clayburgh the loss of the cup had not been any more of a bitter disappointment than in the seasons previous, nor the subsequent shame and disgust at letting himself go to pieces in such a miserable fashion, at a crisis, any more of a poignant sting.

In point of fact, he had almost come to expect it, himself, as inevitable, and completely beyond the pale of his power of prevention. He had even inured himself to the scathing mind-torture to which he afterward subjected himself, in the realization that he had failed simply from sheer lack of nerve and ability to produce anything like the best that was in him.

Even the epithet "quitter," that after the match, in the crowded billiard-room, he overheard coupled openly to his name, by a feminine supporter, who waxed thoughtlessly hasty in her disappointment at his wretched performance, lost some of its keen sting in the face of the greater calamity that seemed to be looming up inevitably and with fatal swiftness.

As for the other and greater half of the trouble, it was that same "Mixed Foursomes" match that was to be played off in the morning; and the gist of it all was that he was to play the day's match through with Dorothy Hasbrook for his side-partner.

He had met her, after an unusually productive season of athletic women at the club—all of whom were ready, at a moment's notice to out-walk or out-golf the male element, and in so doing, had seemed in his eyes to forfeit half their feminine charm and allurement. Her almost girlish slenderness, beside some of these muscular frequenters of the links, and a hundred dainty graces that seemed so completely a part of her and apart

from them, called softly, insistently to all the big muscular manhood in him.

Even after he had learned, in many a fatiguing day's play, that she could more than hold her own behind the caddies, she lost nothing of that which first caused her to spell the "only woman," in his eyes. Long in advance of his unwontedly diffident tongue, his eyes and actions told her, ceaselessly, how much she had taught him to care. The spoken words, in fact, were only a scant two weeks distant and, as yet, unanswered; though he knew, instinctively, that she would not have bade him wait for his answer, unless she did care a little, as well.

And now a fickle Fate had stacked the whole deck against him, and without one blush at the cheat. On the morrow he was to play, stroke for stroke, with the girl whose nervy, consistent game had distanced the whole field of women golfers; and in just such a rank exhibition as the one of the week previous he would ruin, alike, her splendid chance of capturing the cup and whatever chance might still be left him of winning her.

Since the horrible mess of the week before he knew, intuitively, that she was studiously avoiding him as he was avoiding everybody else.

"Look at me," he muttered, in scathing disgust, to his gray flanneled six feet stretched out on the divan, "and then look at that little runt, Spencer, out there playing a shinny-on-your-own-side little game, and figure out how he wins like a 2:12 in a 2:20 class. I'm a shine—a quitter, just as the rest say. I ought to be a babies'-food advertisement; I ought —"

"You ought to be out here on the practice-green this very minute, rubbing the rough edges off your game, if you ever hope to land that cup in the morning," an amused voice cut in, and finished for him.

Like a flash his half-hearted laziness vanished as he swung to his feet with a smooth, swift bunching of muscles.

"Hello, Dorothy," he said, with a funny, half boyish smile, to the girl who stood below, smiling up at him with the tantalizing smile of a successful eavesdropper on her lips. He felt, and realized

that in spite of all he could do to prevent it, he looked like a crude boy with his first sweetheart.

She was just in from the links: her brown hair was blown loosely into her eyes and the short duck skirt that barely reached to her ankles was deeply fringed with grass-stain. Her flushed face was piquantly pretty, as she stood tapping

for the sake of a little needed practice."

"I reckon I was hiding from everybody," he answered quickly; and a little sneaking strain of bitterness crept into the tone before he thought to guard against it.

The girl turned to flash one swift, surprised glance at him; and then studied the green tinted tips of her white snea-



"He gets yellow," they said

the ground with the gun-metal putter in her hand, with nervous irregularity.

"Why, I'm really beginning to believe that you were hiding from me," she said, with a little air of surprise, as he vaulted the low rail of the veranda and strode along at her side, half dragging, half carrying the clanking caddy-bag. "And I know that it is absolutely the first time I have had to hunt up my side-partner,

ers with undue concentration, as she asked:

"I don't believe I follow you. Why?"

"Oh, I've only grown tired of being the center of attraction for the public gaze—the monument of those who fought and bled. You see, I'm just recuperating a set of shattered nerves and other things, in anticipation of the next performance."

This time he succeeded, passably well, in making the tone lightly bantering, but the girl at his side only swung her stick, in a silence rich in thought.

At the edge of the practice-green they stopped, but as he stooped to squeeze the balls from the elongated pockets on the sides of the caddy-bag, the girl's spirit changed, whimsically.

"I don't believe I ought to play another stroke to-day. My hands are blistered so now that I don't know how in the world I shall ever be able to swing a club in the morning, and all day, at that. Look!"

She spread her hands out in front of him, for his inspection.

For one infinitesimal second he looked, as she bade him; then he caught the two little palms that were spotted an angry red, where the leathern grip had chafed them, in the quick, hot grasp of his strong, tanned ones. For a moment she let them lie; and yet refusing to raise her eyes in answer to the insistent call in his gray ones. Then, as he stooped swiftly, to raise her hands to his lips, she snatched them away with quick impetuosity—almost roughly.

"Don't be entirely absurd, Lee!"

At the little ring of scorn in her words, a deep, sullen flush of red crept slowly over his face, under the bronze coating of tan.

"Oh, I didn't know you felt it that keenly," he murmured; and the quick light of a great hurt filled his eyes.

As they crossed the long grass that

bordered the sides of the links, until they came to the brook that ran close in to the edge of the fifth hole, the silence that had closed in on the heels of his last words grew more and more like a transparent glazen wall between them. It permitted each to see the thoughts of the other, without the least opacity, and yet held no promise of being broken without

a shivering crash. Each felt, keenly, the drift of the other's thoughts, and yet they both refrained from broaching them, for want of the words that would fit and convey, properly, the message meant.

"We can sit here, for a moment, before we start back. I think there is something I want to say," Dorothy said, half-absently, as they came to the thick fringe of alders that edged the brook.

Clayburgh stretched himself out on the bank in front of the tussock of rank wire-grass that she chose for her seat. Absently, he pulled down a low hanging branch and stripped the leaves from it, to toss them into the head of the riffle of swift water.

Conversation seemed to have died a death of stagnation that was beyond further resurrection. Then, swiftly, she swung full around toward him and the last vestige of girlishness was stripped away in this quickening of womanly intensity.

"Lee, you are a quitter, then: just as the rest have been saying? You are afraid of to-morrow's match—afraid of your own ability; and so you were sulking alone and hiding away by yourself, like a spoiled child. Do you call that measuring to the standard of a man?"

A ring of scorn bit deeply in the words she meant should be only sincerely



He got away a slashing drive

earnest. She swayed toward him in her eagerness to have him fully understand and feel, as she felt.

"You remember, Lee—or perhaps you have forgotten—that you said—you told me—"

Her face flushed with a little soft rise of color, as she hesitated, for a moment, to pick her words. He cut in and continued quietly, insistently.

"I said that I loved you—girl: I told you that you spelled 'perfection' to me. And, Dorothy, you need not add that 'perhaps you have forgotten.' It can hurt enough, without that."

"Oh! I didn't mean to hurt you—not in that way," she cried softly. "Yes, you did tell me that you cared—and I was glad—you cannot know how glad. And I trusted you to understand that I would not have asked you to wait for your answer, if I had not cared in return." She paused for a moment and then continued, softly. "Now, since all the happenings of last week, I don't believe I do care as much as I did."

She looked out across the links, away from the misery in his eyes, to prevent them from seeing the world of love and pity, which is its next of kin, shining in her own.

"You know, Lee, how often I told you that I would care for a man simply because he was one in all entirety—always glad and strong against greater odds. That is the way I think I cared for you, and without any other rhyme or reason than because I am a woman and that is a woman's way of caring. I thought that every woman's heart was molded to the hollow of some man's hand—and that I had found the one to which mine fitted. So you see, it hurts me a little, too, to think that you are a quitter and fail to finish strong, simply from a man's love of an up-hill fight."

The clinging caress of tenderness in the words sought to gloss over the sting of the instigation. Clayburgh spoke slowly, almost doggedly, as he answered.

"I think I understand, Dorothy. Do you mean that you would judge my whole ability to do things well for you on just one such miserable fizzle—and that only a game of golf?"

"But it isn't the first time, is it?" she asked in swift, wide-eyed eagerness. "And it is practically the only thing that I and a lot of others have to judge you in. Failing to hold yourself to your best, in even the little things, usually means the same sort of a failure in the larger ones. Isn't that almost right?"

"I think I was egotistical enough to hope that there might be something to judge, besides a little ability in a game of golf and the opinions of a golf-daffy 'gallery.' "

"Why, you are only talking childishly now." A ripple of soft laughter had crept into her words. "Lee, can't you see that it is only that I do really care a little, even yet, that I want you to do things well—best—because you are doing them in my name. I want them all to see that the streak of yellow they think they see in you is, in reality, only pure gold."

Swiftly, at the soft caress in the tone and the light in her eyes, he swung toward her with all his old, gliding freedom of sinew; but she held out both her hands toward him.

"I know—you cannot understand how well I know—that I can make it worth while."

He crushed her hands between his until she winced at the fierce intensity of the grasp. "Are you afraid that it is too great a chance to take?"

She would not meet the desire in his eyes, as she answered him. "I don't believe I know, myself. I think that I am just that much of a gambler, but it is the size of the stakes to play for that appalls me. There couldn't be a very much larger one in a woman's life. Would you gamble on the chances, just as they stand? I don't believe you would. Would you?"

There was the imp of a mocking dare in her words.

He took up the words and the underlying dare, swiftly.

"Would I? Yes, for those stakes—any time, and gladly. It is all that I have asked for—just a fighting chance; and you know whether I have the confidence there, or not."

The girl laughed low, her eyes shining with more than the stimulant of the conversation.

"Then take your chance," she said, striving to make the words gayly bantering. "The cup for to-morrow's match is beyond compare; and I don't see how it could be otherwise than that it would add immensely to the words of a certain man, after he had won it—if, indeed, he cared to come then. Do you understand and still want the chance?"

"I'll take it, and if I make good—then," he drew her slowly, insistently toward him.

"No, not now. After the game to-morrow—perhaps," she added, as she rose swiftly to her feet, brushing away the clinging leaves.

"To-morrow, then." And the blood that tingled in his very finger-tips admitted of no "perhaps."

At four o'clock on the following day the list of entries had been cut down to the two surviving couples that were to struggle for the title to the cup; and the usual infallible number of "I told you so's" could have been registered as they started on the last eighteen holes of play.

The cards read :

FINALS

Ralph Spencer—Sylvia Burtis

vs.

Lee Clayburgh—Dorothy Hasbrook.

It was a stifling day, hot and energy-sapping in its humidity. Time after time, throughout the fatiguing rounds of play, Clayburgh found himself marveling at the incredible vitality of his partner, who was keeping her game clock-steady, and the clean, sinewy swing that belied the little, tired droop, toward the end.

More than once he whispered to her scarce intelligible words of hot pride and encouragement, and she smiled back at him, gloriously.

"You have been playing wonderfully, Lee, wonderfully," she murmured, as they started toward the first teeing-off ground, from the last green. "Better golf than you have ever played before—and it is this one in my name. Did you remember?"

"It is this one the best that is in me."

He did not dare to look up at her as he pressed the wet sand under the palm

of his hand and put the ball on the tee.

In the very first hole of the last round of play, the "gallery" received the surprise of its palpitating, sensation-fed life. Instead of the miserable fluke that was the usual order of things in Clayburgh's final matches, he got his first drive away, if anything, with a little more careless, devil-may-care swing of hip and shoulder. Dorothy's mid-iron laid the ball well up on the edge of the green, on the second stroke, and then the "gallery" awoke from its lethargy of surfeited excitement, to buzz audibly, as, without a trace of the usual indecisive over-care, he put the ball into the hole with a long, pendulum-like sweep of the putter.

"I knew I could pick 'em. I knew I could. He's found his game—and it's golf this round—all right—all right," chuckled old Silvanus, on the outer edge of the crowd.

At the end of the first nine holes the cards swung back to an "even up," after zigzagging, nerve-rackingly, back and forth, throughout the entire distance.

"Lee Clayburgh, quitter," was a forgotten entity in this new game he played, that was even more vitally consistent than the wiry, nerveless strokes of Spencer's machine-made game.

He found himself swinging for more distance than he had ever dared swing for, before. Dorothy only made up for the steady decrease in the distance of her game, by the unwavering steadiness of her approaching that laid the ball "dead" on the green, time after time, within easy holding-out distance.

And then, with the opening of the second nine holes of play, the luck slowly began to over-balance the scales in one direction. Dorothy had smiled up at him with a wan little grimace of weariness, and Clayburgh, in attempting to play the ball where it would afford the easiest second shot, played with the excessive caution that had so often ruined his game, and bunkered the drive in a sand-trap. It cost two strokes to play it back on the course, and in spite of Dorothy's long approach and a hole-out in one, from the edge of the green, the hole went to Spencer and Sylvia.

"Don't try it again," she whispered, as he stooped to pick the ball from the cup. "I understand why you did it and I am glad—and appreciate. But go on with your old, swinging game that is yourself. I am feeling much fresher again."

But in spite of the long chances that they ran and, almost unfailingly, realized on, Spencer and Sylvia were still that one unlucky hole "up," when they made the last turn and started back toward the club-house.

Clayburgh had forgotten that it was his usual "yellow" round of play—that he was a stigmatized quitter. He had forgotten everything but the tired, thoroughbred girl at his side, playing the game, shot for shot, on sheer grit alone, as a woman can, and the entire conviction that they could cut down the lead and win out. He felt that same "lift" coming that carries one over seemingly insurmountable barriers, once the initiative leap is taken.

And then that capricious Fate that seems to honor no rules of any game, again drew a hand.

A heavy summer shower had cut a deep, narrow fissure under the wooden edge of the teeing-off ground, and as Clayburgh stepped up to scrub the grass-stain from his ball, he became aware of it only when his foot slid into it, on the loose gravel, and he fell in a heavy, sidewise drop. With the fall, there came that nerve-quivering little snap that means the severing of a tiny tendon, and he felt his face go white, as the hot, dizzying surge of pain swept over him. Then he was back on his feet again; protesting and laughing aside the anxious inquiries, and the hands thrust out to assist him. He stepped as squarely on the injured foot as on the other and choked back the giddy pain with tight-set jaws.

Three more holes to go! Half-hazily,

he wondered if he could last it. As he swung to the next stroke, the agony in the effort deadened all the vitality of his muscles, but the big sweep of the club and the weight of the shoulders behind it put the ball well down the course. His partner had not seen, or if she had, she gave no sign of it. She was playing mechanically, as if tired out.



She swung on the ball

Number 18, the last hole, was the longest of the course, and through Clayburgh's splendid "long" game, where he was invariably at his best, their ball lay well up on the green, one stroke better than that of their opponent's.

It called for a far easier stroke than a score which Dorothy had "put down" with a clean unerring swing of her putter, during the round. It meant the winning of the hole and a tie match: a playing off in the morning would swing every chance back in their favor again. Dorothy would be entirely fresh once more, and his ankle braced and bound back into place. Swiftly, in the oppres-

sive, breathless hush of the crowd, he ran over the chances, in his mind.

Dorothy swung back her stick for the stroke; the dead quiet of the spectators was nerve destroying. Then, as she swung on the ball, instead of meeting the face of the club squarely, it caught the toe of the iron and spiraled off, almost at right angles to the up.

Clayburgh was silent, stunned, for a second. He was overwhelmed at the swift mishap for which he had not entertained even the vaguest fear. Even as he stepped forward, smiling, to continue the pretence and offer a semblance of a laughing consolation, he knew that it was not a mishap.

Then the hushed "gallery" sprang suddenly into life—a fluttering, brilliant hued butterfly where there had been a silent, lifeless chrysalis a moment before. It swept the players into its whirl with a pandemonium of congratulations for winners and losers, alike, on a superbly played game.

The tensity of the moments before was as if it had never been. One was reminded of the confusion that always follows the hush during the performance of a great artist at an afternoon *musicale*. Only at such times people express their honest feeling while now Clayburgh was subtly conscious that the words beating upon his ears did not convey the speaker's thought.

Clayburgh lost sight of Dorothy as the crowd swept between them. Slowly, dully, the full explanation forced itself in upon him, and the congratulations rang as hollow on his ears as was the consolation in the realization that he had, at least, vindicated his old black record.

"She threw the shot away; she did not want me to come back."

The thought burned itself upon his tired brain. He wondered, whimsically, at the mechanical ease with which he met and parried the lively sallies of the gay chaffing crowd.

As inconspicuously as possible he disengaged himself from the madly whirling vortex. The twilight that had settled on the end of the match, had deepened into a thick, velvety dusk, and that, and

the eagerness of the butterfly "gallery" that fluttered toward the brilliant, swaying lights of the club-house, aided and abetted his escape.

He was glad for the lessening light. He wanted to be alone, to think, to readjust himself to these new circumstances in which he was the more securely entangled because he had in no degree foreseen them.

It was close to the place where the brook ran in near the edge of the fifth hole, and he met a couple of stragglers hurrying in across the damp grass.

"You're going in the wrong direction," they called, failing to recognize him in the dusk. "Drop some sticks? Better leave them until morning."

Clayburgh growled an almost inarticulate answer. As he dropped on the edge of the stream, under the thick shadow of the alders, he heard them laugh, echo-like, out in the dusk.

"I suppose they think that I am yellow now, over the loss of the cup," he murmured, with a bitter, half sneering smile.

The significance of the symbol the Cup represented was borne in upon him. His lost love was that. He had lost the cup and with it all the cup had seemed to hold for him. How should he meet the eyes of Dorothy, for she must know that he had not been deceived by that little dissembled *faux pas*. Dorothy—that was all—just Dorothy! She had given him the sign; it was for him to understand.

The dull ache in his throat out-pained the hot throb in his ankle. Only the soft swish of the alders, at his back, awakened him from his lethargy of misery. As he turned, Dorothy was standing close behind him, her face wanly white and tired in the thick shadow. In that one moment of swift revelation, he learned, for the first time, how much she had come to mean to him.

"You made me follow you back, all alone in the dark—and I am woefully tired. I know the accusations that you have been bringing against me in the high court of your own mind, and I am going to forgive them because I have been a little unfair, myself. I followed you, Lee, to tell you that the loss of the

cup might not matter, after all—when you care to come."

She had slipped softly back through the alders, and was speeding, white and ghostlike, across the darkened links, when he overtook her. Silently, hungrily, he swept her tired little form up into his arms, crushing her to him.

"I did throw away that stroke, Lee," she said a moment later, "because I did not want you to think, for one little minute, that I would risk all this on a game of golf. I only wanted you to know, for yourself, that you could do it. I was sure of you, and the rest never counted. It was enough when I saw your

face go white, and you would not—Oh! I am properly ashamed to have forgotten it, and you must not carry me another step."

As she slipped to the ground, and raised her lips, wide-parted and smiling, she added:

"You were not going to come back, in spite of the lost match. It would be a difficult task to persuade the rest of it, after to-day's play, but I have proved it, at least to my own satisfaction. You are a quitter, Lee."

She laughed lowly, gladly, up at him.

"Not with you for a side-partner," he murmured, as he drew her face to his.



"I told you you spelled perfection"

Deep Waters

BY EDWARD CHILDS CARPENTER

Author of "The Code of Victor Jalott," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY FREDERICK J. MULHAUPT

I.

BLAKE'S hansom pressed through a crush of cabs, carriages, and automobiles, all struggling toward the *porte-cochère* of a great house whose dazzling lights transformed the whirling snow into tinsel. The cries of the drivers, the clank of steel trappings, the muffled tramp of horses, the blowing of motor-horns, and the distant sound of violins proclaimed the arrival of guests at a party.

The special officer, who opened the door of Blake's hansom, started as he looked into the alert, boyish face that smiled him a greeting. He touched his hat with an almost reverential salute and turned to watch with wondering stare the lithe, square-shouldered figure now hurrying up the carpeted steps in the wake of a satin train. Blake's glance, lured by the shimmer of the train, followed its undulating folds to where a hand, reaching daintily from the sleeve of an opera-cloak, caught up a billow of ruffles. From the flash of a silvery slipper his eyes lifted to the glint of a blonde *coiffure* and paused there in wonderment. Something in the pretty poise of the girl's head struck him as familiar, but maids and footmen conspired against his efforts to satisfy himself as to her identity. He found himself shunted off among a pack of his own kind, and not until he had done his duty thoroughly by hostess and *débutante* daughter did he catch another glimpse of the blonde *coiffure*. He was descending the stairs to make his adieu, when his attention was again challenged by the sheen of a satin train. Its owner was standing alone on the landing below him. As he stopped to stare, the girl turned abruptly and met

his look of startled admiration with a frank expression of pleasure.

Blake hurried down to her. She held out a hand.

"I am glad to see you," she exclaimed impulsively.

At the same time a tinge of color came into her cheeks.

"You are the most satisfactory as well as the prettiest—"

"Hush!"

"Very well; but don't you think that I should be permitted to say something complimentary after waiting two years?"

"Is it as long as that?" Her surprise was admirably affected.

He understood, but restrained a smile. "To be exact—it will be two years tomorrow night."

"What a memory you have for dates!" She had turned away from him and was looking over the balustrade. "Do you see that tall man, with the long mustache, poking about down there?" she asked suddenly and, without waiting for a reply, went on: "He is looking for me. This is his dance. Would you mind telling him—his name is Coggins—that I'm up here."

"I certainly would! Remember it is months and months since I have heard the sound of your voice!"

"Your implied compliment does not blind me to the fact that you are disengaging."

She laughed indulgently.

"Say 'selfish' and I shall not object!"

"Selfish!"

"Thank you; also thank heaven—your partner Coggins has disappeared— forfeited all right to you by not knowing instinctively where you were. Will you be good enough to sit this dance out with me?"

"I'm afraid there is nothing else for me to do!"

"On second thought, I have decided to hunt up Coggins!"

"It's too late—now!"

"That's better—it indicates that you are not as heart-broken at losing Coggins as you pretend to be!"

"How vain you are!"

"How well you know me!"

"I do not know you at all!"

"Then on what grounds do you treat me with such exquisite indifference? I almost said—'impertinence'!"

"Will you please tell me, Mr. Blake, if we are going to stand out this dance?"

"No, Miss Maitland, I hope we are going to sit it out in that corner of the deck—I mean recess!"

He waved his hand in the direction of a bow-window, partly screened from the stairs by tapestry *portières*.

"If I were not so tired I should not think of sitting in a corner with you."

She led the way to the window-seat and permitted him to adjust a cushion at her back.

"Comfortable as a deck-chair," Blake resumed irrelevantly, as he dropped down beside her. "The last time I had the privilege of finding a nook for you was the night before we landed at Southampton. You remember?"

"Rather imperfectly!"

Blake became serious. "Are you perfectly fair to remember it only imperfectly, Nina?"

He waited, but as she made no reply, he went on:

"Perhaps, after all, we never sat shoulder-to-shoulder through those wonderful nights in mid-ocean—with the moon—"

"Don't!" she commanded, with a nervous laugh.

"Say 'Cuyler' and I won't!"

"Cuyler!"

"Thank you! But you are making fun now and I'm in deadly earnest."

"Eliminating the moon and all that sort of thing—let us go back to that last night."

"Perhaps you are able to remember saying that there was no luck in marriages inspired on shipboard; 'mushroom affairs grown on slippery decks'

you called them, I couldn't convince you that I was sincere, but finally we compromised; agreed that if at the end of two years I still felt that I couldn't live without you—"

"You know I never put it that way," she interjected.

"Well, I can't live happily without you!"

"You were in an exceedingly merry mood for an unhappy man when I met you to-night."

"That was because I met you! You should have seen me half an hour before. But that's neither here nor there. Now, I have kept faith. In all these years I have lived up to the letter of the bond—a letter to you once a month—absolutely platonic; a letter from you once in three months; never a sight of you, even when you were here in New York with Washington only five hours away."

"Your letters were exceedingly interesting. I'm glad you are going to leave the Secret-Service and enter the law. When do you begin?"

"Next month! But you're shifting the subject. I repeat, Nina, that I have kept faith, and now—"

"But you haven't! You were not to see me for two years!"

"Oh, that's splitting hours! It will be two years to-morrow night! Besides, this was an accident! I came to New York on a treasury-case. The Underwoods, parental pals, you know—simply had to do the right thing for once."

They were silent again. In the dim light Blake could see only the contour of her face silhouetted against the stained-glass window.

"Of course," he ventured at length, after waiting with the vain hope that she might give him some clew to her thoughts; "that agreement was all well enough as a test of my sincerity, etc., and I always understood that it bound you to absolutely nothing; still, I knew that you were not the sort of girl to suggest such a thing if you had no idea that sometime you might—care enough for me to—to—"

"I'm horrid," she cut in dejectedly; "but I don't know now whether I do care enough—"

"Pardon me!" It was the voice of Major Underwood. He was parting the *portières*. "Are you there, Cuyler?"

Blake started to his feet.

"I've been looking all over the house for you," his host explained. "There's a man by the name of Pierce at the door—says he must see you at once. If you're in a hurry, I'll take care of Miss Maitland. Shame to spoil your evening," he concluded and stepped discreetly aside.

"Thank you, major; it is very important."

Blake turned a perplexed glance at the girl.

"Don't let me keep you," she entreated, glad enough of this respite.

"You'll be at home to-morrow night?" He put the question tentatively.

"Yes, I expect to be, but—"

"Expect me, then! Good-night!"

II.

At that moment Blake felt that the Secret-Service could never repay him for the sacrifice he was making. How he hated the service and how he berated himself for ever entering it! Nevertheless, he had a pride in finishing off his three-years' term with a *coup* which should justify the trust that his chief had placed in him. Now it looked as if he would be the instrument of breaking up a band of counterfeiters, who for the past six months had evaded detection and flooded the national currency with the most dangerous of spurious certificates that had ever come under the notice of the government.

The product of the counterfeiters' work was a ten dollar treasury-note, so perfectly made it passed muster before the experts of the treasury-department. It was first detected by an observing teller in a small New England bank. He came across two crisp ten dollar bills of the issue of 1899, and noticed that each bore the same number. Of course, he knew there was something wrong, as no two bills are ever numbered alike.

For months the Secret-Service department, in its efforts to locate the engravers of this counterfeit, had been making a

systematic investigation of the work and habits of every engraver in the country. City after city was eliminated as the possible headquarters of the band, until there were but three left: Chicago, St. Louis, and New York.

Blake was in charge of the *corps* in Manhattan, and he had narrowed the field of his investigation to one concern: the Markham Engraving Company. The Secret-Service man had discovered that this company employed a secret photographic process in the reproduction of engravings. He had seen some of the work, and fancied that the process might be used with admirable results in counterfeiting the government's currency.

During the past week Blake had also found that a light often burned late at night in the superintendent's office in the third story of the company's manufacturing plant. Further investigation disclosed the fact that the superintendent, Buckley, and his assistant, Griffith, were the men who frequented the office after business-hours. There was also a mysterious third man, who had been seen to leave the place at midnight and drive away in an automobile. So far, all efforts to secure the identity of the unknown had failed, and as he had been discovered there but once, Blake concluded that he might be a distributor of the counterfeits.

The night before the Secret-Service man went to Underwood's dance, both Buckley and Griffith had been observed entering the plant. A watch was set, and shortly after midnight, when the superintendent and his assistant closed the front door behind them and went away, Blake and his men forced the rear entrance and made an examination of Buckley's offices. They looked into every possible hiding-place for plates and paraphernalia, from the oil-cloth cushions of the chairs to the big brass fire-gong which hung on the wall, but found nothing which justified their suspicions, until Blake came upon a safe concealed behind a panel of the wainscoting.

"It's a Hadley & Dixon time-lock," he announced. "No use tinkering with the combination; but if they're working here

to-morrow night, I'm going to try again in a different way. I have a feeling that we are after the right men."

So when Major Underwood announced that Pierce was at the door, Blake felt sure his lieutenant had come to tell him that Buckley and Griffith were burning midnight-oil at the Markham Engraving plant.

"Griffith is working alone," said Pierce as their cab rattled across the car-tracks and started down-town. "Buckley's sick. I saw a doctor's motor at his door this afternoon."

"That should simplify matters."

"Yes, sir. All we'll have to do is to pipe him away with a hurry-up call that'll give him no time to hide the plates."

Blake reflected. "There's a telephone in the superintendent's office. We'll call Griffith up in the name of Buckley, tell him to drop everything and come at once to the superintendent's house—make it imperative!—no time to waste!—can't explain over the wire! Catch the idea?"

Pierce nodded.

"The minute Griffith has gone, I'll take a look at what he's left behind. If, as I believe, we should find the plates, we'll touch nothing, but wait until some night when Griffith, Buckley, and the unknown are all there, and we'll bag the three of them."

They drove on for a while in silence. Presently the cab stopped.

"Where in thunder are we?" asked Blake as he sprang out and looked up at a dingy lamp-light. "Confound it," he exclaimed, "this is the East side!"

"Yes, sir," mumbled the cabby; "that's the directions he give me."

"Nothing of the sort," stormed Pierce. "I said, 'West Ninth.'"

"I guess I know what you said!" retorted the driver with vehemence.

"There's no use in losing more time arguing about it," interrupted Blake; "we've lost almost half an hour now. Turn around, driver, and make the best time you can across town—there's a double fare in it for you if you hurry."

It was twenty-five minutes past eleven

by Blake's watch when they again alighted. After dismissing the cab, they dodged around a corner, skirted the front of the big engraving-house, and stopped in the shadow of a tattered awning which commanded a view of the back entrance of the plant. A faint glimmer of light crept through the iron shutters of a third story window and told them that someone was still at work up there; but there was no sign of the man who had been detailed to watch the place.

"Graves has no business to desert his post like this," grumbled Blake.

"There he comes now," said Pierce, catching sight of a man hurrying along the narrow street and carefully avoiding the spots where the lamp-light cast a glow over the pavement.

Graves was short of breath when he came up. "I thought you'd never get here," he panted. "I've been six blocks to telephone you at headquarters."

"You would have done better to stay right here," rejoined Blake. "You can't tell what may have happened—who may have come or gone—while you were away."

"There's nobody but Griffith up there now. Buckley's sick—"

"I know!"

Blake turned to Pierce.

"Go right ahead now and telephone Griffith; then hurry back. If he takes the bait, I'm going in as soon as he comes out."

III.

During the time Pierce had abandoned his watch in front of the factory to summon Blake, and while Graves was holding his own post in the back street, a man entered the establishment by the front door and made his way through the various printing and engraving-departments to the superintendent's office. He was George Maitland, a respected member of a private banking firm and a man whom neither the world nor the Secret-Service would have suspected of being an associate of counterfeiter.

As Maitland opened Buckley's door, Griffith started in alarm and made a move toward a revolver which lay on the

table where he was operating a hand-press.

"Gosh, but you gave me a start, Mr. Maitland. We didn't look for you until to-morrow night."

"I've a chance to plant five thousand to-morrow and I thought I had better take advantage of it. Where's Buckley?"

"Laid up with the grip; but we struck off a big batch last night—the best we ever turned out—printed on government paper."

"Government paper?"

"Yes, Buckley's invented a bleaching process which even takes the seal off the genuine one dollar bills. We print the tens on them. Makes a beautiful job, doesn't it!"

As he spoke he took a package of counterfeits from the open safe and passed them to the visitor for inspection. While he was admiring them, someone rang the electric-bell at the front door.

"Now, what do you suppose that is?" asked Griffith nervously, picking up his revolver.

"My *chauffeur*, I guess. Run down and tell him that he's come too soon. I don't want him for a half-hour yet."

"Look here, Mr. Maitland, it isn't safe to have him come chuffing up here in the middle of the night."

"Very well, it sha'n't occur again; but I can't go until I've counted these bills and made them up into portable packages. Send him away. I'll walk home."

It was Maitland's *chauffeur* who rang the bell. The car had arrived at the plant while Graves was telephoning to Pierce and before Blake alighted there.

Griffith opened the door on a crack, keeping one hand on the revolver in his coat-pocket, and peered out. There was the *chauffeur*, and standing beside him a young woman enveloped in an opera-cloak.

"I'm Miss Maitland," she announced. "I've come down to pick up my father."

Griffith scratched his chin. "He—he isn't ready to go yet. He said I should tell the *chauffeur* he needn't wait—he'd walk home."

"Walk home in the snow? How silly! He'll do nothing of the kind! The car

shall come back and I'll wait for him here!"

"But—but you can't, Miss Maitland!"

"Why not?"

"Because—because it's so late!"

"That's no reason!"

The girl turned to the *chauffeur* and told him to drive to some place where he could keep warm and return in half an hour.

"Now, you've simply got to take me in," she laughed, addressing the frightened Griffith.

He opened the door wide enough to admit the unwelcome visitor, then shut it and threw the bolts.

"I'm sorry, but you'll have to wait until I run up-stairs and get a light."

He was gone before she could stop him.

The dark frightened her as she stood listening to the patter of Griffith's receding footsteps. She hesitated for an instant, then gathered up her train and began groping her way after him. Once the lace of her petticoat caught on a projecting nail. She thought a hand clutched at her from behind. She gave a faint cry and stumbled up the stairs toward a patch of light thrown from the superintendent's door. She heard her father's voice rising in angry accents and the clatter of a piece of machinery being dragged across the floor.

The girl paused, feeling that she had no business there; that she had done something imprudent. It even occurred to her that she had best return to the street-door, but one glance into the blackness below sent her scurrying up to the office.

As she entered, Griffith was lighting a candle and Maitland was busy making a package. He stopped and looked up at her in annoyance.

"It was so dark down there, papa, that I simply had to come up," she explained. "I—I hope you don't mind?"

"You were very foolish to come for me at this hour, Nina," he returned, viciously tying a knot.

Griffith set down the candle with a shrug and began putting pots of ink into the safe.

"I wish I had driven straight home



"Let us go back to that last night"

from Underwood's," exclaimed the girl pettishly; "but when Jules told me he would have to call for you here, I thought you might like to have me for company.

"I don't think you're behaving at all nicely, papa. This is a horrid place. Why do you come here, and why is there such mystery?"

The telephone-bell rang sharply. Griffith sprang to the receiver.

"Hello!" he called in a low, anxious tone. "Buckley?"

Maitland started and leaned across the table listening with avid concern. The girl, puzzled but conscious that something of vast importance was transpiring, looked first at her father and then at the man at the telephone.

Griffith was saying, "I thought your voice sounded — what? — why — Maitland's here! — Yes, but — immediately — Gosh!" He hung up the receiver. "It's Buckley! Says we must go to him at once — not lose a moment!"

"What's it all about?" inquired Maitland, thrusting the package into his pocket.

"I don't know what it is," returned Griffith angrily, catching up his overcoat. "Said he couldn't tell me over the 'phone; only that it was imperative we should come at once; and he wouldn't say that without a good reason."

Maitland glanced uncertainly at his daughter.

"You'd better go, papa. I shall not interfere with your business. I'll wait until Jules comes back with the car."

Griffith shook his head in reply to Maitland's mute question.

"The young lady had better come along with us. There's a livery-stable about four blocks from here where we can get a cab and send her home."

"Walk four blocks through the snow in these?" The girl showed a pair of small feet incased in satin slippers.

"No, you can't do that!"

Maitland pulled at his mustache in a quandary.

Griffith went to the door.

"We're wasting valuable time!"

"It's my fault I came," said the girl;

"and I'll take the consequences. Now, run along, papa; it's nice and warm here and I'm not the least afraid."

She helped him into his big fur coat and gave him an encouraging pat on the back.

"I don't like to leave you," he grumbled, "but I don't see that there's anything else to do."

"There isn't!"

She pushed him out to the landing where Griffith stood waiting impatiently, then closed the door upon them.

All the way down the stairs Maitland worried, trying to think of some device to get his daughter away without losing time in reaching Buckley. As they came to the first floor he stopped.

"I can't leave that girl this way, Griffith. You go ahead to the livery and tell them to send a carriage at once. I'll stop here by the door until it comes. Then Miss Maitland and I will drive to Buckley's. I'll get out there and send her home. In that way I'll satisfy myself that she's all right and at the same time reach Buckley almost as soon as you do."

Griffith growled an assent and went out into the street alone. Maitland bolted the door after him and stood there undecidedly. He considered returning to the superintendent's office, but the thought of stumbling up those long flights of dark stairs discouraged him. He felt his way to a seat on a pile of paper, lit a cigar, and waited.

IV.

Graves, on watch across the street, saw Griffith leave the plant, and as soon as the counterfeiter turned the corner, the detective hastened to the rear and reported the success of their ruse to Blake. Pierce had not returned from the cigar-store whither he had gone to telephone; but the Secret-Service man determined to act at once. He made for the back door where they had forced an entrance the night before. It was the work of only a few minutes. The experienced Graves picked the lock and loosened the staple which held the bolt on the inside.

"I'm going to close the door after me," said Blake, "and I want you to keep an eye on the front so as to warn me if Griffith should return before I finish. When Pierce comes back tell him to watch here."

"Don't you think I'd better go with you in case—"

"No! If I need you, I'll manage to ring the fire-gong in the superintendent's office."

Blake flung his overcoat across the balustrade, lighted a dark lantern and, cautioning Graves to shut the door quietly, began tiptoeing up the stairs.

He paused frequently, straining his ears to catch any sound above. Hearing nothing, he went on until he saw a tiny stream of light which crept from under the door of Buckley's office. He stopped on the narrow landing and listened, thinking how strange it was that Griffith had not taken the precaution to darken the room before he left.

Blake set the lantern on the floor, examined his revolver, and threw open the door, careful to keep in the shadow. He heard a faint cry of fear, and his eyes, quickly adjusting themselves to the bright light, took in the details of a girlish figure huddled in a corner. He stared. The testimony of his eyes seemed incredible.

Another glance assured him that he was not deceived. It was Nina, and she was alone.

He stepped into the room. For an instant neither spoke.

At length he said, "In the name of all that's mysterious, what are you doing here?"

She seemed to be relieved at the sound of his voice, for she sighed and advanced toward him.

"I—I was about to ask you the same question; but it just occurred to me that somehow my father must have sent you for me."

"Your father?"

"Oh, I forgot—you don't know him. Then why are you here?"

Her father! Blake hesitated. What should he say? What business could her father, a banker, have with these men, who—?

His thoughts swerved suddenly as his glance fell upon the counterfeiters' press where it had been pushed under the table. Even from where Blake stood he could make out the familiar design of the famous Garfield certificate etched on a plate which lay beneath the freshly inked rollers.

At the same time it flashed into Nina's mind that Blake was there in the interest of the Secret-Service, and she recalled with apprehension Griffith's reluctance to admit her, and the telephone-call which took her father away so hurriedly. She advanced a quick step and grasped Blake's arm in a kind of terror.

"There—there is something wrong—and my father—"

"I—I don't know! It must be a mistake!"

"What is it? I insist upon knowing!"

Blake laid his revolver on the table and took Nina's hand in both of his.

"I tell you I do not know, little girl, but whatever it is, I want you to feel that I stand by what I said to-night; that you have me to look after you, no matter what comes."

"Oh, yes, I believe that, but—but—you're lying to me about the rest. Don't think, just because I have blonde hair and blue eyes that I haven't any courage. If my father—has—done—anything—anything imprudent I want to know it now."

Blake replied slowly. "I only know that someone has been making counterfeit money here to-night!"

"You know too much!"

It was Maitland's voice. He stood at the farther door covering Blake with a revolver. The Secret-Service man instinctively reached for his own weapon.

"Stop!"

It was a command that could not be ignored.

"Now stand aside from the table!"

Blake again obeyed.

Meanwhile, Nina stared at her father in bewilderment, not realizing for a moment that he must be an accomplice of the counterfeiters. Then, as the terrible significance of his presence there pieced itself together in her quickening mind,



Griffith opened the door on a crack

she turned toward him, and with ineffable anguish cried,

"Father!"

"Stay where you are!" Maitland made an imperative gesture with his left hand, and without taking his eyes from Blake or changing the position of his revolver, he asked,

"What terms will you make?"

"If I could manage to sound that fire-alarm," rejoined the Secret-Service man, pointing to the gong hanging over Nina's head, "I wouldn't need to make any terms."

"You're not on this job alone?"

"No, I have men in the street who would respond to any alarm."

"I wouldn't try it though, if I were you—I might bring them up here with a pistol-shot!"

"That would be almost as bad for you as for me!"

"Oh, no it wouldn't! We've provided for just such an emergency. There's an exit by the roof, a ladder down to the next building, and a fire-escape at the back of a small street where neither your men nor anyone else could see. I should get off all right."

There was a light in Maitland's eye which Blake did not like. It was plain to him that the man was desperate, in spite of his calm manner. If he could only prolong the conversation either Pierce or Graves might begin to grow nervous at his absence and make an investigation on their own account.

"Do you know how it feels to have killed a man?" he began. "I guess not! I've seen a good many murderers and talked with them, and I never met but one who didn't confess that he would rather have been killed himself than have done for the other man. Why I—"

"Shut up!" ordered Maitland, catch-

ing sight of Nina's pale face out of the corner of his eyes as she dropped into a chair with an exclamation of dread.

"What terms will you make?"

"It's for you to say what you want!"

"Twenty-four hours in which to leave the country, and immunity from pursuit!"

Nina was on her feet now.

"Yes, yes, you'll give him a chance to get away, won't you, Cuyler?" she entreated.

Blake would have readily lied to Maitland—agreed to his proposal and then rounded him up within an hour, for he thought that fair enough in the way of his duty, but somehow he could not bring himself to lie to the girl he loved. He hesitated.

"By Heaven, if you don't I shall kill you!"

It was a threat which Maitland only half-meant; but to Nina it was full of desperate determination, and her imagination saw Blake murdered and her father paying the penalty for his crime. An instinct made her spring to the bell-rope.

With one sharp pull she had sounded the alarm, whose reverberations echoed throughout the silent building with deafening violence.

Unnerved by her act, Maitland dropped his revolver and stood there trembling, panic-stricken.

Blake looked at the man and then at the girl and before her appealing glance his stern resolve to give the banker to justice faltered. He stooped quickly, picked up Maitland's revolver and handed it to him.

"Now, go," he commanded, almost fiercely; "up over the roofs. I'll give you all the start I dare; and lie a little, too; but when you're safe out of this mess—don't think that I did it for your sake."



Kettles and Heroism

BY LIEUT. HUGH JOHNSON, U. S. A.

Author of "The Lamb Rampant," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY GLEN C. SHEFFER

I.

THERE was an odor of damp earth and bruised roots in the trenches. The stretch of tan stubble between the edge of the cocoa-grove and the bosket fringed hill across the valley glared the sunlight back, white and blinding, and grove and hill and valley were as quiet as a painted landscape. The men who had turned the yellow earth of the trenches and the men who had taken them at dawn were nowhere to be seen in the open, and only above the tawny mound a thousand gaudy tropical insects droned and circled indolently, happily unconscious of an occasional Mauser that droned as one of them, to swish on through the broad wilting leaves, or sometimes to chug into the parapet and send an avalanche of small stones and crumbly, yellow, clay rattling down on the blue-shirted shoulders in the trench. These were the missiles of sharpshooters at a thousand yards; they had droned so since morning, and "B" Troop had sapped the subject of interest.

A talky sergeant, who sat in an ape-like posture before a row of men, backs against the farther wall, legs outstretched, had done much to relieve the cramped hours, and even the officers, while appearing to do otherwise, were listening to him intently from under their hat-brims. He was talking in highly colored soldier-vernacular of wounds and mutilations.

"An' I looked in the bottom of the *banca* an' there I seen ol' Dopy, an' right up above his eye they was a small blue hole—no bigger'n a gurrul's little finger. When I touched him he sort o' groaned an' said, jus' like he used to after payday, sleepy and drunk-like, 'Such a he-ache!' An' over an' over again. 'Such a headache!'"

From somewhere in the open a Mauser pellet, unaccountably stripped of its steel jacket, came screaming. It struck a fragment on the parapet with a vicious "whan-*ng*," like the grating of a fine blade on flint, screamed, ricocheting, up the incline, and rolled gently over the crest and into the trench with a noisy at-

tendance of small stones. Mushroomed and lead-incrusted, it plumped itself accurately on the dilapidated campaign-hat of a boy who sat silent at the end of the line and rolled lazily into his lap.

The sergeant's eyes were turned away, but the man next the boy saw his face as he stooped over—as gray as pearl dust. He was an old soldier, Dale, and his hand went out quietly and gripped the boy by the knee.

"Cur'us little thing, aint it, sonny?" he asked impersonally. "Funny, but it's been proved that not one o' them things in a thousan' ever hits anything but dirt an' grass—funny now, aint it?"

After moments the color came back slowly; the talky sergeant was still speaking, and Dale tried vainly to drown the sound of his voice from the boy's ears.

"An' cap'n sings out, 'Advance by rushes,' an' we was fiddlin' along that way when my platoon halted. My mouth was terrible dry, an' I says to Craney on my right, 'Craney, gimme a chew, will yeh?' jus' like that, an' when Craney reached back, he got it. Jus' grunted like somebody'd poked him in the stummick, an' crumpled. They was a little thuddy soun'. But he jus' crumpled, from the middle, both ways, an' slumped down with no noise at all, jus' slumped. He never did say nawthin'! An' when we went for'rd, he bit my leggin' strap, an' I had to kick loose, yessir, kick."

This time it was a rock splinter and really dangerous. A long range Mauser, close to its flight-end, had shattered a piece of shale, and a splinter like a dirk blade whirred by the boy's ear and struck point downward in the soft earth near his hand.

He got to his feet scrambling, and stood looking at it with white face and staring eyes.

Dale did his noblest, but the talky sergeant was all observation, and savagery had grown in the last few moments.

"Aw, look at mamma's little Willie."

His too eager voice called the attention of the entire troop, and it vented its pent nervousness in nasty jibes.

"Willy the fly-fighter," and "Yellow-neck," they yelled.

And it was a diversion until one of the officers cautioned perfunctorily, "Steady, you men," and with sharpness, "Get down, you, Ebers!" to the boy who stood aghast, gulping at a swollen something in his throat.

It was his first real day on the "line" and he had made a sickening discovery. Had that discovery been less intuitive he would have said, "I have too much imagination for this," but as it was, he simply gasped to himself again and again, "I'm a coward," and it pulsed with his throbbing temples, "Coward! coward! coward!" till he dared not lower his eyes from his hat-brim.

His tropical service had begun badly. When he left the transport with a detachment of recruits and casuals he had slumped in the ranks, shortly after joining, with a queer buzzing in his ears and a jumble of red lights in his vision when he lowered his eye-lids. He opened them on a conscious world of endless rows of white cots and a singular perspective of smooth counterpane in the reserve hospital, weeks afterward. The troop had looked askance at his 'hospital service,' and had waited consciencelessly for him to "make good," and now he was losing ground with them every second. All this occurred to him in the ensuing confused moments and he had lost what control he had. His shoulders drooped to the slouch of mental dejection, and he dared not look even at Dale, whose rough hand had again stolen to his knee.

His temples only pulsed louder their accusation and he looked up stupidly when the troops yelled, and asked in a shamed voice of Dale,

"What is it?"

"Wait a minnit—Cap'n jus' got a message—

"Yes, that's it. We're goin' to take the nex' line o' trenches an' I guess that'll about en' this little San Juan de Dangnan fuss. Jus' nawthin' at all. The guns is over on the lef', they'll dump a few shells as we go on, an' then we'll git in them other trenches an' go home. Not so bad, is it, sonny?"

But the boy's intuition read all that Dale sought to conceal and he refused to

take comfort. He was realizing his abject terror and, like a newly caged animal, his mind sought possibilities of escape.

Some one was speaking from an infinite distance and he saw many blue backs scuttling over a near sky-line. A contemptuous phrase was growled in his ear and he, too, scrambled up, almost without motive-power or will. There was a fearful pandemonium about him now, though his perceptions were working dumbly, as if stupefied with liquor. He heard the continuous *r-rip* of rifle-fire and his eyes caught the instant red of the gas-blasts. The earth of the glacis was showering over him, from the furrowing Mauser lead, and a strong hand fairly dragged him over the stubble.

"Come on, sonny."

It was Dale, he knew, and he dared to curse at Dale, though this was his supreme cowardice.

"Aw, come on, sonny. They couldn't hit a flock of barns."

His mental vision cleared at the next halt. He was flat on his stomach and he ceased his insensate pumping of his breech-bolt and looked to right and left.

The halt was half-way across the open, and "B" Troop lay prone upon the stubble in open order. It was the same loose, slouchy line that had slashed through the Chinese defenses, to the open admiration of half the stiff and pipe-clayed armies of the world—non-coms. on the flank and rear, and officers standing back of the formation; broad-shouldered, open-necked blue shirts pressed close against the sheltering earth, while brown, bare arms caressed brown, bare carbine-stocks and kept that stinging, vicious fire sweeping a swath out in front as wide as the troop.

It was the culmination of careless, Western audacity and a thing to admire, for there was a peppering of unaccountable little dust-flicks in the stubble all about, and the mannikins, with their measured ranges, were slashing the advance with their fire.

There was no room in the boy's heart for admiration. The pelting, swishing things that fell about him drove the sight of the Line from his eyes and left

only a distorted vision of a wet face with a little blue hole above the eye no bigger than a girl's finger, and a strong man writhing on the ground. He saw even the knuckle sinews of grasping fingers and felt a grating, clinging sensation at the heel of his own boot.

These visions became, presently, more clear. He felt, suddenly, a certain little spot near the pit of his own stomach—simply was conscious of its existence—a spot that intruded itself upon his sensibilities and brought up an instant train of imaginings. For the wet face with the small blue wound was his own and the strong man on the ground was William Ebers. His own hand stretched out, fingers rigid, and he saw strained sinews showing tense and white above his knuckles.

He heard a command in two words, and Dale sang out to him cheerily, but now he was writhing on the ground, actually writhing, and he reached for Dale's boot-heel.

Dale turned to look at his ghastly face.

"Pore kid—" he began, but an officer to the rear of him heard.

"Dress on the Line, Dale, dress!" he shouted fiercely, and then to the talky sergeant, "Look out for Ebers, sergeant, he's hit."

He heard a step on the stubble near his head, and he knew that the sergeant was leaning over him with some compassion. Even his voice was comforting now as he spoke to the boy.

"Did they git you, ol' man?" and he cursed "them." "Where? In the stomach? Ah!"

The boy lay rigid, swearing that he would not turn, but the sergeant's firmness was too much for his lesser strength and all compassion was gone from the voice he heard then.

"I don't see no sign—Mebbe—Le's see."

He forced the tense arms apart roughly.

"Aw—hell." He kicked the prostrate figure brutally. "Git on your feet, you measly cur!" And he screamed his soldier loathing and disgust. "Git up, you blathering puppy, you—"

But the boy covered his head with his

clasped arms, rolled on his face, and kicks and curses did not avail to move him an inch.

II.

From a particularly rude and brutal diversion, the abuse of William Ebers became a heartless and savage habit in

ers' baiting was confined to the invention of highly fantastic names and crude threadbare jokes called practical.

To understand what followed you must know that the troop constituted a hundred full-blooded, active, healthy young animals recruited from as many diverse localities at home. Mostly they were untraveled, unread country boys, brought straight from Somebody's Cor-



"Git on yer feet, you measly cur!"

the ensuing garrisoning of Danginan, and perhaps Danginan itself was responsible for this.

The two weeks following the sharp little fight in the trenches came as a welcome lull in the months of marching, and starving, and fighting that "B" Troop had been experiencing. They needed two weeks rest, no more. At first the men lolled in the streets, fought, gambled, and sang good-naturedly and were supremely happy. During this period Eb-

ners or So-and-So's East Eighty to a misty, somnolent, fairy-land, where the black, torpid streams ran between jungles of low hanging tropical undergrowth, through endless marsh lands, where half-naked, little brown men worked waist-deep in the warm black ooze. Women came daily to those streams to bathe in the cool, grass-green glades, and carabao stood in the muddy stretches, muzzle deep in the slime for hours on end, with no motion save the blink of

their drowsy eyes. Every attribute of the land was totally different from anything they had ever imagined; mysteriously, dreamily, different. Even the distant skyline was crumbly, jagged, and strangely blue, and from that unreach'd region appalling rumors drifted into Danginan.

At such a place in the crumbly mountains, an *insurrecto* general, with an unpronounceable name, had gathered a wonderful army — two thousand bolomen, a thousand spearmen, and riflemen, and guns. He had set his spite on Danginan; and, on a certain feast-day of the church, about which no one knew anything definitely, he was coming to make an end. This was elaborated by ingenious minds until it became a certain appalling and ever impending danger. This strained upon nerves that had grown tired through sameness of event, and became like a certain sword that hung precariously above the head of a *quasi* king.

Then there was the climate. Each morning a small white sun popped out of the steely East and blazed a glaring pathway across the sky, to pop as suddenly behind the jagged sky-line of the steely West, leaving all Danginan wilted and gasping. The men tossed through the nights on sleepless beds and awoke panting in the uncanny heat of early dawn, dry-eyed and tired. The little groups in the streets dwindled, the songs ceased, and the gambling and fighting became vicious and savage. The men spoke in monosyllabic answers to terse questions, save when they burst into blasphemous tirades upon slight provocation.

An ugly spirit, like which there is nothing in civil life, became evident, and Ebers was abused with sheer brutality. A sergeant kicked him in the squad-room for the most trifling negligence, and when he spoke to the first sergeant, he was cuffed from the orderly-room. A bullying young corporal spent the terrible hours of *ennui* in devising new and original methods of torture, and always he sent naked, grinning little brown people with insulting messages to torment Ebers, and, as a result, the most inconsequential *hombre* in the town jeered at him in the streets, so low had he fallen.

He avoided his own kind and brooded to the danger-point and beyond. In all "B" Troop there was but one man who ever spoke a kindly word to him, and him Ebers avoided. Dale watched the boy anxiously, and from the prestige of his years of service, dared to protest openly against the persecution that had become a morbid habit with half the troop.

Every unpleasant and irksome duty was meted out to him, and at last he was detailed in the kitchen, where he worked with a degraded *Chino* scullion and took orders from a red-eyed drunken butcher of a cook. He had endured it all quietly, without words or cringing, but now he sought out Dale and told him of an appalling resolution.

"I know I'm no good, Dale, and I've taken all this as punishment, but, you see, if it goes on, why—why, I won't even be a man," he confided. "And so I've made up my mind and I'm going. I'm no good as a soldier. It isn't like ordinary desertion. I'm just going to get out somehow—China or home—anywhere."

And in spite of the wild danger of it, Dale was unable to advise him differently.

"Tell them this, when I'm gone, Dale — tell them that I wouldn't go over to the men in the bosket — maybe somebody'd care to know, and if they don't, don't let them say that. I'm not quite all bad."

This was supreme folly, and he might as well have thought of deserting from a transport in mid-ocean, but to Dale it seemed better than the daily torture he was compelled to undergo.

III.

Just here the unexpected happened and Ebers' carefully packed kit never went into the woods.

The surgeon was called to the straggling fringe of the town in the early hours of the morning and he came back to the officers' quarters flushed and excited.

"What's up, *medico*?" they had laughed, for he was an excitable little man. "Katipunan or the ten thousand krissmen?"

There was scant mirth in the surgeon's answer.

Of all the untasted dread of the East that beset the secret hearts of Americans in the Days of Empire, the hint of one was the most fearful. White faced groups of soldiers sat around the mess-fires and listened, with drooping jaws, to horrible tales of it, and shivered with the primal fear of Death at the first evidences of certain minor pains. Tales of it were rife with the natives, and half-remembered pages of history confirmed the worst of them. As yet it had not shown its ugly head, but the word the surgeon hoarsely muttered to his commanding-officer at Danginan was "Cholera."

He was a pioneer in his way, that surgeon, and he grasped the situation with the confident hands of a man who knows the thing to do and does it. The troop was gathered about him in an awed circle in the flare of the oil-lamps, and he told them of their danger and their safeguards. But most of all, he said, "Boil water." After long discourse on acidulated drinks, and disinfection, and the proper burial of natives, he returned to that dictum with impressive regularity, until the thoroughly frightened troop dared even wan little jokes about "boiled water," when they were dismissed. And through these jokes their real danger lay. For certainly there were, among a hundred men, those who derived their opinions and rules of action from shreds of the conversation of other men; and so, after a week of immunity, the troop grew careless.

The natives died like flies. They knew cholera of old. It was a scourge for their misdoings. Perhaps the presence of these very *Americanos* had brought it upon them. Prayers might avert it, prayers and fasting—the *padre* had said so—but this charlatany of boiled water and of certain vats of smelly whiteness, they accepted from policy, and continued to drink water from polluted wells, and to dump the disinfectants into the river, and—to die.

Of all the men who had listened to the doctor's earnest phrases on that first night, none took them so to heart as

Ebers. He walked back to the kitchens and made a great fire wherein he roasted, with painstaking care, every "Q.M." kettle and pot in "B" troop's mess, though he struggled with the blear-eyed cook for the privilege. Perhaps this was fear for his own safety, but the cook cursed him and the *Chino* scullion jeered.

"B" troop was surfeited with work now. The burial parties came in at all hours of the night and the men supervised the continuous disinfection of Danginan.

"Give them coffee and something hot when they come in at night," the doctor had said; "it'll subtract malaria from the sum-total we've got here already."

But things were not always hot at two in the morning, and the cook's left-arm jab was the pride of "B" Troop, so that it was not a politic thing to make a noise in the kitchen at that hour. But here appeared William Ebers with a living fire and an ever-simmering pot.

"When you goin' to go?" Dale asked him one night, when a dirt-begrimed, silent crew had filed out. Ebers evaded the question with a steaming cup of commissary coffee.

"It's always boiling, you see," he countered quickly, "and that little screen-lid keeps out the flies. I don't see how any germ's going to stand the ghost of a show if the men'll just get all their water here."

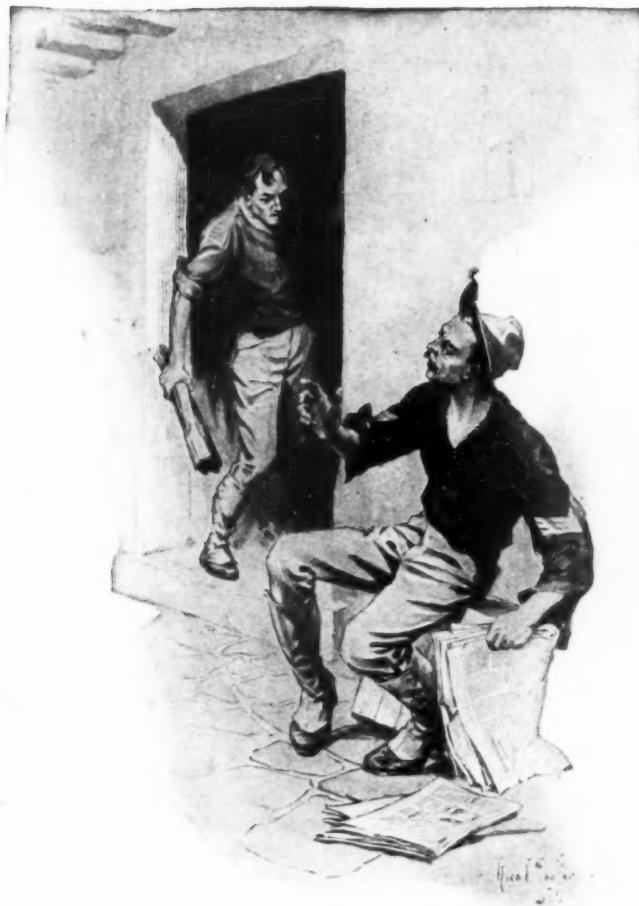
"You aint hittin' this clip too hard, are you, sonny?" Dale asked, as he peered critically at the rather wistful face of the boy, "'Cause if these fellers aint doin' their work I'll—"

Dale fancied a note of anxiety in the too-quick interruption.

"No, no—that is—you see, the cook, he don't believe—I mean," and his voice rose incongruously, "we're boiling all the water here now."

For the door to the kitchen bunk-house had swung suddenly back and, framed in the darkness of the unlighted room beyond, stood the blear-eyed cook himself.

"Whatch you bummers grousin' about out here—hey? I want t' sleep, d'y'understan'? What d'you mean by havin'



"I think I've killed Dugan, sergeant; I wish you'd come in and see."

this light goin' this hour in the mornin'? Yes, you, you yellow-necked four-flusher, you."

Dale looked across at the pitifully huddled figure of the boy, who sat with his hands clenched against his thin chest, his eyes wide and apprehensive with physical terror.

"If cap'n wasn't so stuck on you an' your slop-messin, I'd try you a go right here an' now. And if you don't let this kid alone I'll do it anyhow," he said as he walked to the door. Then, with an inspiration, he added: "I got a sort a idee what's goin' on out here; if it's correc'

I'll put a crimp in you, d'y' understand?"

And the last chance sentence stopped the blustering retort on the swollen lips.

Dale's parting glimpse of the room included the boy crouched in the shadow of the plainly startled cook. It was suggestive, crudely symbolical, and it remained in his mind insistently.

Some one has said that an army moves, like a snake, upon its stomach, and "B" troop had moved far. One must understand that the ration is a slender thing, and that its proper handling requires the touch of no one short of an expert, and that such experts are rare. In a country

like Danginan, where cooks are not, where the native diet consists of rice and a variety of small, bony fish, and where the changeless, unattractive ration is the only provender, the cook occupies a position of *sine qua non* and "B" troop's captain had no choice.

Then, too, was not Dugan a jewel of a soldier, with all the accomplishments dear to a troop officer's heart? He held the coveted sparring championship of the regiment; the troop boasted the blue pennants of three successive years of baseball supremacy, and even Dale gave the credit to the cook. In a cavalry regiment there is fierce rivalry over these things, and the captain was accordingly enthusiastic on the subject of his senior cook.

"Yes, he drinks," he would admit; "he's in a perennial state of saturation, but if you fellows knew the brand you'd be feeding it to your teams. And he's the best cook in the regiment. He can make your mouth water with musty hard-tack. I'm satisfied. Let him drink."

Nevertheless, when the grating of Dale's boot-heels had quite died away, "the jewel of a soldier" turned on Ebers. A greasy cleaver lay on the table, and this he seized suddenly, his face a contortion of fury, partly real, partly simulated. He gripped the attenuated shoulder of the boy and his fingers bit deep.

"Runnin' down your boss, hey? Handshakin' to that ol' fossil of a graveyard, hey? I'll hand-shake you. I'll skin you alive, that's what I'll do t' you. You talk too much for your size, you do! You keep your grub-stow shut about this kitchen—got that? And you stop talkin' to that feller 't jus' went out o' here. If you don't"—and his fingers shifted to the pulsing throat—"I'll kill you—understan'—kill you an' dump you in the Chink's room an' swear he done it—See?"

The cook was an artist in such effects and he keenly enjoyed the result of his efforts now, for this was Ebers' fault. He was born with a predisposition for fear as some men are born with little resistance to disease, and all this was heightened by an imagination that followed the words of others with a series of vivid pictures. He saw—actually saw—his own

body limp and sprawling on the matting of the Chinese scullion; he saw the folds of the brown fatigue-trousers hanging from the thin inert legs that were his own, a loosened shoe-lace twisted on the floor, and the red dabbling on the mat. His limbs relaxed and, very quietly, he fainted.

"Of all the brass-bound nerve," said the cook, in his expurgated explanation to the mess-sergeant. "An' I was only scarin' him up a little—givin' him a run for his money 's you might say."

IV.

The true tale did not escape Ebers' lips, for no one despised his abject physical cowardice more than himself, and no one was more conscious of it. He could not risk the final descent from Dale's sympathy, and he simply closed his thin, pale, lips more tightly, and continued to burn out mess-pans and to boil water.

There was, moreover, a new element that crept into his daily fears, with a growing insistence that threatened to bring all his sacrifice to naught. Under the strained conditions of his life, his nervous dread, his nightly vigils, the old disease took strength. This sickness of the tropics saps the substance from between tense nerves and plays upon them stridently until sheer moral resistance is of little avail. Ebers was more conscious of its ravages with each new day, and with the red glow of the mess-fires on his wan face he sat through the stifling nights and brooded over it.

One day he startled Dale, alone in the kitchen with him, by a vehement outburst.

"It's the last day, I tell you," he suddenly cried, "and I'm going to the first sergeant with it, Dugan or no Dugan. I'm all in. Can't you understand? I'm losing myself! If anything should happen to me you'd all die—like rats in a hole—like the little brown rats you're burying as fast as you can dig—you're a lot of fools—plain fools—got that? You've got a drunken gorilla and a blamed savage in your kitchen, and you're playing hide-and-go-seek with Cholera."

It was as if the kitchen-sink had voiced its opinion of extended-order drill, and Dale stood with open mouth before the feverish eyes and drawn, white face of a suddenly developed fanatic; but he had seen "Bino" and its work, and he thought the boy was drunk, just as the first sergeant thought afterwards.

"Cholera!" he almost screamed, "Cholera that's killing these wispy man-things like flies, and you see it and dare come out here and drink from poisoned cups. Cholera, hear? Cholera—can't you understand?—illiterate idiot—you can't!"

The torn screen flapped and Dale saw him hurrying toward the barracks.

He found the first sergeant sleeping sonorously, and in his present mood he dared to hate the coarse face and to feel revulsion at appealing to a foreign-born master. He shook the man roughly, and poured out a torrent of scarcely intelligible complaint, abuse and recrimination. The first sergeant was a phlegmatic Prussian and he divided soldiers in the abstract into two classes—drunk and sober, and he boasted an efficacious method of dealing with the former. He rose calmly and deliberately, walked over to Ebers, and with the utmost precision doubled his fat arm and knocked him into an unconscious heap in the corner of the orderly-room.

The physical fear that had kept the boy silent during the terrible weeks of the epidemic was being rapidly burned away in the fire of a growing delirium, but the clear, cool well-spring of his mortality lived on together with all his innate likes and dislikes. In the beginning of the struggle that followed his return to consciousness he remembered the coarse, dumpy figure of the first sergeant without charity, and he also thought of the brutal cook and the sergeant who had kicked him, and the corporal who strove to deprive him of a single peaceful moment, and all the thoughtless cruelty of the troop—but his was the battle of a giant, and like a giant he went back to the stifling heat of the kitchen—a giant with the dry, burning eyes of a madman. His lips, compressed in a thin, hard line across his teeth, alone evidenced his remaining sanity and his triumph.

The mess-sergeant, drowsing over a package of month-old home-papers, in the shade of the bunk-house, was roused from his nodding by the sound of a fierce scuffle. He smiled knowingly, and his chin dropped once more to his cambric shirt.

"Jus' cookie rustlin' the fly-fighter aroun' 'ith the rollin'-pin, I reckon," he muttered.

But it was not the cook who stood quietly in the doorway, a fagot of firewood still in his hand.

"I think I've killed Dugan, sergeant. I wish you'd come in and see. He tried to make me fill the tanks from that condemned well, and he threatened to murder me if I kept Ah Sing from doing it, or if I made a complaint. He's in there on the kitchen floor."

It was Ebers, and the mess-sergeant stood aghast before him. The cook was not dead, but he was shaken with fright and begged the mess-sergeant to keep silent.

"Take a fall on yourself," he pleaded, "an' think how that would soun' f'r you an' me with cap'n and *medico* gone daffy 'bout their fool water. I'll fix this ass 'thout reportin' him. Me report that yellow-neck? You watch me!"

V.

It was one of those soul-rasping nights of the tropics that wilt strong men in the vigor of their youth. The rains had been threatening for days and the hot, dry months hurled this last night in their face as a final flaunt of accumulated strength. The west was a rampart of piled-up, sooty clouds that stretched like solid works across the sky-rim, with wavering sheets of heat-lightning continuously shivering beneath them, revealing their existence and their muggy thickness. The sweltering earth lay under, dusty and breathless. Out in the bosket, an infinite chorus of dry-throated insects raged forth a monotony of ringing-like, anaesthesia sounds. It would have become a thing unnoticed, by reason of its sameness, save for the raucous cry of a loathsome lizard, hidden somewhere in

the kitchen-thatch, that droned forth, at precise intervals, in the general pitch, but with ten-fold intensity, startling lonely ear with its certain "die—you—die—you—die—you," leaving one wondering if its cry were really "die—you" or "you—die," until, into the foolish reverie came the ringing again with heartless insistence.

At greater intervals came gusty precursors of the rains. Inexplicable puffs of wind, as hot as the breaths from a blast-furnace, they rattled among the crisp, withered foliage and turned its underside white against the lightning, leaving the sufferers gasping and tortured.

In "B" troop's kitchen sat Ebers, naked to the waist before his coffee-vat, his head forward in his hands, and his emaciated chest fluttering pitifully for breath. It was a weird place—that kitchen—with its great black shadows flickering ghostily with the rise and fall of the fire, and its dimly defined objects obtruding grotesque shapes in the semi-gloom. He heard the heavy tread of a voiceless squad on the bare, convent floor, even heard the creaking of bunks as the men threw themselves down, fully dressed,

and completely exhausted. The sounds seemed to come from an infinite distance, and he could never be certain that hours had not passed before he saw Dale in the kitchen-doorway—Dale grimy with dust, his shoes caked with clinging yellow clay.

His memory is faulty from the moment he saw Dale, and only unimportant little details are clear—he was certain about the yellow clay for it suggested something he feared. Dale had been drawing conclusions all through the heart-breaking day, and he saw things distinctly now. He watched Ebers closely as he served the coffee, and insisted that they drink together.

"I understand' all about this thing now. I'm goin' to see cap'n in the mornin' an' read him the complete pedigree o' this jewel 'v a sodger-cook o' his'n."

But Dale's words were not honored by attention.

The boy had adjusted a handkerchief about his neck, with the bight tied to his wrist, and he raised the cup to his lips very slowly by lowering on the free end. Dale watched him with wide eyes, and in spite of elaborate precaution, the fluid barely reached his lips.

"Dover taught me that—'Member Do-



"Now, what d'ye think o' that?"

ver, died at Ilo with D.T.'s. Slick scheme—Dover, he used to be bunkie to that fellow Dopey that Condon told about that day—Dopey 'th hole—blue—big's girl's finger."

Dale was first startled by sudden realization of the terrible sunkenness of the boy's cheeks. His eyes glowed red about the pupils and their strange, lambent quality was accentuated by the depth and darkness of their hollows. He was talking thickly now, in a monotonous tone, and Dale half-rose in his chair as every check to sanity broke.

"Him an' fellow 'at bit a boot-heel 'r strap 'r somethin'—n a couple 'v cholera-germs crawlin' 'n a *banca*—n they'll get ol' fossil Dale—"

The old man half-undressed him and carried him struggling to his bunk. His panted message brought the doctor and the captain at a run. Cholera in the cook-house spelled ruin, and Dale was not familiar with early symptoms. They found him back in the kitchen trying to force a huge mess-pan into the fire.

"I burned 'em all out 's mornin'," he chattered, "but you got to be careful—Cook don't believe in cholera-bugs in a *banca*—crawlin' an' crawlin'—*Chino* brings condem' water in here every day

—but I fool 'em—pour 't all out, y'see—way in night. 'Cause I got t' make up f'r bitin' ol' Dale's boot-heel—so he'd kick loose—'yessir, kick, 'Cause I didn't have—li'l blue woun'. 'S 'fraid I would, y' see—"

And he laughed regardless of discipline.

It is a fact about which the medical department is vaingloriously verbose, that the first troop to encounter Asiatic cholera survived intact, yet the boasters have never heard the name of William Ebers. But a garbled version of the conflict with only the lurid features dwelt upon, is the talky sergeant's favorite diversion for halt-minutes on home practice-marches, and he always concludes:

"Naw—cap'n never had him canned. He deadbeated in hosp'tal for three months solid, 'n come out cocky's a gobbl'r. Didn't stay long in the troop, though. This canal-business come up then, an' he got a chance at a civil-service job—got it, too, in Panama—eddy-cated dood he was. Cap'n wrote on his paper—I learned it by heart, it's so dam-foolified—'For steady devotion to extreme duty, I have not seen his equal in the service.'

"Now, what d' you think o' that?"

His Bearers

BY JOHN BARTON OXFORD

Author of "With Equal Eye," etc.

MARTHA CRANE stood by the front room window looking out at a desolate landscape, which but recently had flaunted all the glory of gorgeous autumnal colors. But now, instead of the scarlet and gold of a week ago, the leaves of the trees, which lined the roadway, made one dull vista of monotonous russet brown. Overhead, low-hanging clouds raced across a leaden sky, and the gusty wind of late November whistled shrilly around the corners of the house

and sent the dead leaves whirling in fantastic spirals.

There was nothing cheerful nor inspiring in that outlook from the front room window. Everywhere were the ravaging marks of the recent heavy frosts. All too plainly in that bleak world without she saw the heralding of early winter.

The latch of the front gate clicked, and, turning her eyes from the endless stretches of brown, she beheld a portly, wind-blown figure coming up the path.

Instantly she sped to the front door and threw it open. The wind whipped her skirts smartly about her angular frame and played sad havoc with her thin, gray hair, but she beamed a welcome to her caller, who struggled, with much asthmatic puffing, up the front steps.

"How'd do, Mis' Graves? Aint much of a day, is it? Seems 'sif this spell of dull weather never would let up. Come right in an' set down by the fire."

The puffing Mrs. Graves stepped across the threshold, pushed the door shut with an elbow, and, leaning against it, struggled pantingly to regain her breath.

"How d' do, Marthy?" she wheezed at length. "This aint no day for me to be out—not with my phthisic; but I thought I'd run over an' see how you was."

"I'm real glad you come," said Martha. "Come into the front room. I've jest built a fire in there."

She led the way, and Mrs. Graves, with many wheezings, followed. Martha threw wood into the little air-tight stove and opened the draughts until its sides glowed redly, while her caller sank into a nearby rocker, threw off her cloak, and extended her fat palms to the grateful warmth.

"How's your father?" was Mrs. Graves' first question.

Martha's thin lips curled a trifle. "Oh, he's pretty well," she said slowly, "pretty well—considerin'."

"Considerin' what?" Mrs. Graves asked flatly. "Aint ailin', is he?"

Martha moved cautiously to a door at the other side of the room and very softly closed it. The curl of her lips had grown to a grim smile.

"He's as well as could be expected," she announced, "considerin' the fact that he's sittin' out there in the kitchen, makin' arrangements for his fun'ral."

"Makin' arrangements for his fun'ral—his own fun'ral!" Mrs. Graves cried, aghast. "Good land o' love! What ever put such an idee into his head?"

Martha shrugged her shoulders expressively. "I give it up. It beats me," she said. "I guess, likely, it's the weather as much as anything. He gits terrible low-spirited in these dull spells. He us-

ually begins by readin' Jeremiah by the hour. When he does that I know well enough what's comin' next. Before night he'll always begin to wonder which minister he'd ruther have an' try to make up his mind who he wants for bearers. When he gits on that strain, it seems sometimes as if I should give up."

"I should think you would. Does he have them spells often?" Mrs. Graves inquired solicitously.

"Often enough," was Martha's response, delivered with no little asperity. "I'll vow that in the last ten years he's planned it out no less than a half-a-hundred times, an' every time it's always dif'rent. At last accounts I b'lieve he wanted the Baptist minister; he's had a fallin'-out with the Methodists. He hadn't picked out his bearers this time, when you come."

"My sakes!" said Mrs. Graves. "Aint there no way you can git him out of the notion of it?"

Martha's face twisted in a sour grin. "He don't come of a breed that you can argue with," she said. "The only thing you can do is let him go his own gait. If he was sick, I should have more patience with him; but to have him carryin' on that way when there aint nothin' under the sun the matter with him, is sorter provokin', to say the least."

Mrs. Graves nodded sympathetically and a silence fell between them. When the conversation was renewed, it was on somewhat more pleasant topics; indeed, so pleasant that the gray afternoon was waning and the bleak twilight was coming on when Mrs. Graves finally took her departure.

Scarcely had the front door closed behind her, when Isaiah Crane came stalking into the front room, his big shoulders drooped and a look of utter resignation upon his wrinkled old face.

"I've got it all fixed," he announced in a sepulchral voice to his daughter, who was bending over to throw wood into the stove.

He waited expectantly, but she vouchsafed no response.

"I want you to have the Baptist minister," he went on.

Still his daughter gave no sign that she had heard. The old man craned his neck to peer at her with disapproval.

"Be ye listenin', Marthy?" he asked tartly.

"Yes, I'm listenin'," she said with weary patience.

Isaiah brightened perceptibly, but almost instantly his face resumed its lugubrious cast.

"I've had consider'ble trouble pickin' out the bearers," he continued, "but I've made up my mind at last. I want you to git Ezry Holt and Rufus Willet an' Sam Dean an' Joseph Sears. We was all of us boys together, an' it aint no more'n fittin' that they should see me to my last restin'-place."

Martha, still bending over the stove, opened the damper with unnecessary vigor.

"I want you to see 'em to-morrer an' git their promises," said the old man.

"You aint expectin' to need 'em right off, are you?" his daughter asked, and there was a touch of sarcasm in her tone.

Isaiah shook his head mournfully. "You can't never tell," he observed. "My folks generally go sudden when they do go, an' I want to feel that things is all straightened out. I've been failin' all summer. I know it. I aint the man, by a good sight, that I was last year. I'm likely to be took 'most any time. Might be took unconscious right at the beginnin', an' that would leave you in a pretty stew, now wouldn't it, with all the funeral arrangements fallin' to you, an' you knowin' how particular I always was about 'em. There aint no good ever comes of puttin' things off. You'll go an' see 'em to-morrer, wont you?"

"Yes, yes, I'll go to-night, if it'll make you feel any better?" said Martha impatiently.

"To-morrer'll do," Isaiah conceded. "But I shouldn't put it off any longer'n that. Maybe one or another of 'em will have some excuse for not doin' it an' then I'll have to think up someone else. It's always well to take things in time. Now, that's off my mind, I guess I'll let you git my supper for me an' then I'm goin' to bed. I aint feelin' none too scrumptious."

The following morning Martha sat by the kitchen window reading the county-paper, which the R. F. D. wagon had just left at the gate. By the opposite window sat Isaiah, his spectacles pulled low on his nose and a bible, opened at Jeremiah, spread on his knees.

The dull weather still continued unbroken. The world without was as gray and bleak as on the preceding day. The dead leaves rustled down from the branches, and now and again a stray drop of wind-driven rain plashed sharply against the window-panes.

The only sounds to break the stillness of the kitchen were the ticking of the clock, the crackle of the fire, and the rustling of the county-paper as Martha turned its pages.

Presently Isaiah looked up from his reading. He glanced critically at the sky, then turned to peer over the tops of his spectacles at his daughter.

"I don't b'lieve it's goin' to git to rainin' jest yet," he hazarded.

Martha, her eyes glued to the pages of the paper, made no response. Isaiah fidgeted in his chair.

"An' so long as it aint rainin' now, I should go over an' see Ezry an' Rufe an' Sam an' Joe before it did, if I was you," he suggested.

Martha laid aside the paper. There was a smile on her lips that puzzled the old man sorely.

"There aint no good of my goin'," she said. "I shouldn't find any of 'em at home if I went."

"Wouldn't find nary one of 'em at home!" Isaiah sputtered. "Why wouldn't ye?"

For answer Martha picked up the paper and passed it to him, at the same time pointing a finger to an item on the second page.

"That's why," she said quietly.

Isaiah read, gasped, and read again. It was a single paragraph of the column headed, "Gleanings from Middleville."

Middleville will be well represented at the Veteran Firemen's Convention, to be held at Randall next Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, by Mr. Ezra Holt, Mr. Rufus Willet, Mr. Samuel Dean, and Mr. Joseph Sears. Mr. Holt and Mr. Dean both ran with the old "White Ea-

gle," the first tub purchased by the town of Middleville, and which for many years carried off the first prize at the various tournaments in this country.

Isaiah sat for some time staring out of the window. His eyes had a far-away look, his brows were furrowed in thought.

"Goin' to Randall Thursday," he muttered. "That's to-day. Them old critters, with one foot in the grave, gallivantin' off to a Veteran Firemen's Convention like a parcel o' young un's. Well, I snum!"

Ten minutes later he arose from the chair and went shuffling up the back stairs. In his room above, Martha could hear him moving about noisily. Now the bureau-drawers creaked; now the door of his closet swung open with a bang. Presently he was shouting stridently to her over the railing.

"Marthy, Marthy, where in time is that b'iled shirt you done up for me last week?" he called. "I can't find it nowhere. An' my galluses, that had oughter

be in the top bureau-drawer, aint there, nuther."

Martha creaked up the back stairs and entered a room sadly cluttered with wearing apparel, which had been thrown hastily from the closet and the bureau-drawers. In the middle of the floor stood an old carpet bag, its sides bulging with things hurriedly thrust into it.

"What on earth—" she began. "Father, where are you goin'?"

"Where am I goin'?" he repeated with some warmth. "Where do you s'pose? If them old fossils I've picked out to be the bearers at my fun'r'l can't stay home long enough to be asked, I got to go after 'em, that's all. Git some handkerchiefs out of the drawer an' put in the bag, will you? An' hurry, for I want to git that 9:23 train. I'll show 'em there aint nothin' so all-fired smart in their goin' to Randall, an' I'm older'n what any of 'em be, if I didn't git my name in the paper. Got in enough handkerchiefs, hev' ye? More'n likely I sha'n't be home till Saturday-night."

The Return of the Avenger

BY MELVILLE CHATER

ILLUSTRATED BY BLANCHE V. FISHER

WHAT Mr. Kinsley said at the teachers'-meeting was:

"I believe that the garden-contest scheme will prove invaluable, not only as a means of studying the children under new conditions but also as a stimulus to outdoor interests and a developer of individuality."

What Miss Coyne, of the third grade, thought in her young, ideal way, was this:

"A beautiful idea! Each little child planting his own little plot, each reaping as he sows, according to the spirit. Really, quite beautiful!"

And this is what Miss Coyne's pupils said when the uproar that greeted her

announcement had somewhat subsided:

"Real gardens, Miss Coyne?"

"Any sort of flowers we want?"

"Do we do it in school hours, Miss Coyne?"

"Miss Cohen! Say, Miss Cohen!"

For, despite repeated corrections, young Freeman Greenberg always addressed her thus. "What sort of a prize is that prize?"

"We'll talk of that later, Freeman," she returned pleasantly. "The most important thing is for each one of us to determine to dig and sow and water our little gardens and tend them with our whole hearts, to make the best possible use of the seed that is given us—"



"Poor little Smithy is his own **worst** enemy"

"Please, Miss Cohen!" Freeman's face brightened with possibilities foreseen. "Do we git that seed free, Miss Cohen? Do they give it us for nothin'?"

Her face fell a trifle as she assented; she had not meant her words to be taken quite so literally.

"Now, suppose you get out your composition-books," she said, "and each write a letter telling me what kind of a garden you would like to plant. Yes, and you may also vote for the prize by naming your choice in the letter."

Fifteen minutes of concerted scratching formed the basis of Miss Coyne's requisition for seeds, which she handed to the superintendent with a report of unanimous enthusiasm.

Dominic Pascarella wrote "Lemone tree;" Ulysses Grant Sisco (colored) spoke loud and clear for the succulent melon of his forbears; Effie Hopper, pale and sentimental, sang a pean of morn-

ing-glories and cast her vote for "A baby-camera for prize, so I could take a picture of my dear teacher;" while Milton Hassler adopted as his platform, "Cabige for that it grows so pretty and useful in eating." Elsa Auerbach, who had just drawn a map of Persia, began with, "I love the beautiful Tigris-lily;" William Garner, a freckled, moon-faced boy, who brought prodigious lunches to school, was found in a hypnotic, watery-mouthed state, gloating over the fragmentary epic, "Sweet botatoes is—" Freeman Greenberg wrote, "If we get that seed free, I would to plant a bush for cotton-goods, like in the photto"—the schoolroom down-stairs was decorated with photographs of our national industries—"for my father says that cotton-goods he makes the best money off of." Finally, a tear-stained page, signed "Eva May," was handed to Miss Coyne who read, "I can't be in it. We live in

Cooper's Flats, so we haven't got a garden, and the backyard is where they hang washing, and they wouldn't let me. I would plant a rose, only that I can't be in it."

And such was the inception of that famous contest which for three months set every front garden and back alley of Starlingways agog with ambition and suspense: ambition that set awed eyes towards a five-dollar bill, mythical sounding yet well vouched-for, which high arbitration had decreed as the prize; suspense which thus voiced itself before, during, and after school hours: "Are you in the garden-contest?" "Does your father help you any?" 'Cause, now, Mr Kinsley says nobody can get the prize who don't do it all themselves." And invariably the afternoon - session closed amid an atmosphere of suppressed excitement, shot through with whispers such as, "You goin' over to Hammond's Woods, this aft?" or, "I'll race you over to Hammond's Crick when school's out."

"Hammond's" was a large estate lying a few hundred yards back of the schoolhouse, and its "crick" was a slender stream that meandered through the woods, affording waist-deep plunges for the intrepid swimmer and, moreover, a rich, alluvial soil for contest-gardens. The school board had gained permission to use that cleared strip of land abutting

on Hudson Avenue and bounded by the creek and a graveled road which stretched inward from the street, guarded by the sign, "Private Driveway," and upon this field did the poorer, gardenless contestants meet daily to wage a mimic war of all nations.

Sometimes the conscientious Miss Coyne, who boarded nearby on the country-road, would stop at Hammond's on

her way home from school to study her charges under these new conditions. Her approach, heralded by, "Teacher's comin'!" while yet she was afar off, was the cue for masterful activity; a line of water-carriers could be seen passing to and from the creek, and even the larger boys, less susceptible to the gentle craft, assiduously plied hoes and rakes, forgetful of their recent boasts to clear six beds on the running jump. The gardens lay in two rows divided by a footpath and at the head of each plot was a stake bearing a cross-piece inscribed

with the owner's name. This somewhat lugubrious prospect was modified at closer view by an announcement of the particular species whereof its gardener entertained lively hopes of resurrection, as thus:

W. GARNER
TURNUPS.

IDA MARITZ
LETTUC.

ULY SISCO
WATER MEL



At every step Miss Coyne's progress was met with vexed questions. Abraham Waddy, whose plot was labeled, "Horse Reddish," inquired tearfully, "Why don't my garden get ripe, Miss Coyne? I just pulled one up, an' it aint a bit redder'n yesterday." In the same category came a hot dispute, precipitated by Willie Garner, a boy particularly gifted in the misapplication of facts, who, confusing carrots with lobsters, uttered the astounding heresy, "Carrots oughtn't t' turn red until you boil 'em." Mamie Whelan lifted wails of treachery over a mess of small, shriveled cucumbers, the victims of a special treatment which, averred Bella Simpson, she had heard her mother advocate, to-wit, that she always "did" her little cucumbers in vinegar. Anon young Pascarella, the credulous, the optimistic, who had renounced lemon-trees for egg-plant, approached with chant and treaded measure symbolic of first-fruits. "Da eggs, da littla eggs!" he choired — gratulations that turned to dust in the mouth, what time Miss Coyne arose from contemplating the cluster of small, blue objects, to demand indignantly, "Who has put these robin's eggs here?" To such barren jests Freeman Greenberg paid no heed: Miss Coyne found the would-be cotton-planter seated beside his string beans, absorbed in mental arithmetic. "Say, Miss Cohen," he inquired anxiously, "how many beans goes to a quart, Miss Cohen?" The trend of his calculations, based on an estimated possession of 581 beans was not confided.

And far at one end of the line Eva May was discovered alone, gazing with motherly rapture at the one small bud of a stunted rose-bush.

"But, dear me," commented Miss Coyne, "you must get rid of those insects, Eva!"

Eva started up with a mortified flush. "I never saw those—those things," she murmured.

It was due, no doubt, to William Garner's chaotic treasury of knowledge that the Parish Aid Society received, next day, a modest request for "Parish-green."

But it was no mere insect-pest that dwarfed Eva's rosebush. In the first mad

rush for plots—a juvenile echo of the Klondike—this luckless tenderfoot had been ousted from claim to claim until at last she had reached the reservation's uttermost verge, a bald, barren strip whereon she was permitted to settle in peace, since no one else coveted it. Eva, the meek, and her poor inheritance of earth, somewhat resembled each other. Eva was small and impoverished, so was her garden; Eva had trustful aspirations, and her garden was struggling to produce a rose-tree; finally, she was one of those who are born to be downtrodden, while her garden, adjoining the cross-cut to Hudson Avenue, was worn bare by the daily procession of cultivators, despite the mild protest of her cardboard sign, "Please don't stand on it."

It was with wistful eyes that Eva, a pilgrim to the far-vaunted triumph of Tigris-lilies, peered through the Auerbach's fence, watching Elsa at work. Elsa, the substantial child of retail groceries, knew not the meaning of Cooper's Flats; she lived in remote exclusiveness on Starling Street, where people used whole houses for themselves, and her house was a marvel of shiny floors, and chairs that jounced when sat upon, while the grass was of such exceeding fatness as to necessitate its cutting weekly.

"You can come in and wa-atch," called Elsa, in a sing-song tone that debarred active participation. And so Eva stole on to feast her eyes upon the mass of great, gorgeous lilies framed by a border of red leaves; while Elsa detailed her methods of work and explained the strange mechanism of the garden-hose.

"And I've done it all; there hasn't anybody helped me!" she repeated triumphantly, just as her father entered the back gate, returning from the store.

"You, Elsa!" he called. "You let dot hose alone. What's der use of my planting-dot garden and tending it if you're to be watering and digging at it all der time, hey?"

A glance of amazement escaped Eva.

"Why," she exclaimed, "Mr. Kinsley said that—"

"Go an' tell him, then," jeered Elsa. "Popper only showed me where to plant the seeds anyway."



Blanche Fisher:

Explained the strange
mechanism of the garden-hose

And she hung over the fence to intone after Eva a bitter ballad of tale-bearers.

Now, the facts had been told already by Willie Garner who, while scaling the Auerbach's rear fence, lured by apples, had spied Elsa's papa as he stooped in shirt-sleeved devotion to Tigris-lilies; nevertheless, when the scandal became noised abroad, it was at Eva's innocent head that Elsa leveled the prophecy, "You see, if I don't git even with her!"

Upon this, the dormant rivalry of a town divided into the masses and classes by a railroad-track, burst forth in fury. The North Side children bade the South Side children remember that cheating never prospered; the South Side children replied with shrill insinuations of jealousy, while each side girded itself anew to wrest from the other the coveted garden-championship.

And now to them, entered with alarms and excursions, Master Smith Hammond. Who had not heard lore of "Smithy" Hammond, the bold and redoubtable? Who had not seen him drive up the hill in patrician state, each morning, bound for Castalian Court, the town's most select fount of learning? A week previous Mr. Hammond had said: "Young man, if you get into one more scrape, I'll send you to the public school." Smith had not delayed in testing his parent's sincerity; and now the third grade gaped to behold that notorious character standing before them in the flesh, meek and silent, beneath the authority of woman's eye.

"A little kindness and patience is all he needs," thus Mrs. Hammond, a woman with pious faith in her own children, confided to Miss Coyne at parting. "Poor little Smithy is his own worst enemy."

Smith was a head taller and two years older than any other boy in the room, advantages which had not saved him from the ignominy of the third grade. Even the boldest of Miss Coyne's pupils shrank with blended joy and dread before his lawless, menacing aspect. He had the wiry frame, the alert face of one inured to live at open breach with gardeners, coachmen, and minor domestics; his black, kinky hair, tanned skin, and

furtive, velvety eye, giving promise of Saracenic fierceness, had occasioned the soubriquet, "Nigger," the mere idle repetition of which word, so it was whispered, would throw him into paroxysms of berserker rage. His evil, glistening grin lacked one front tooth, an untimely loss sustained, thus rumor ran, in a terrific personal encounter evoked by the utterance of that fatal epithet.

Kindness and patience kept Smithy's record intact for just one-half of the morning session: a natural reaction came at recess when, in the space of fifteen minutes, he drenched six small girls with a water-squirt and delivered Samuel Boyd a paralyzing stomach-blow which, together with three minor assaults, deprived Smith of the distinction of being his own worst enemy. When apprehended, he was ensconced behind the cellar-door, igniting a cigaret-butt by means of a lens purloined from his mother's best opera-glasses, to the edification of a large and awed assemblage.

For a week Miss Coyne coaxed and threatened, preached chivalry towards girls and charity towards all, with flat failure. Smithy heard in silence, with a forefinger sliding to and fro beneath his nose, and a furtive, roving eye—his manner when taken in malefaction. Detention after school availed nothing: at five o'clock he would strut forth like one who has not winced in the fell clutch of circumstance, and flash a cigaret-butt before the admiring throng.

"Dimmit!" he would say—an approximation framed to circumvent his mother's housemaids, who had been ordered to report profanity—"Dimmit! What do I care? As long as I stay in, she's got to stay in, too. Anyhow, I'll fix her, pretty soon, dimmit!"

In that speech there was summed up the whole of Smith's philosophy, a philosophy which, though Miss Coyne wist not, was based upon a work lying even then in her desk. "The Avenging Angel Series: Dick, the Avenger, Among the Rockies"—such was the title-page of the volume that had slipped luridly to the floor, one day, during geography class. Save as a lost asset of barter and trade, its confiscation did not discommode

Smith: in fact, he but tolerated the Rocky Mountain narrative, his taste finding closer affinity with "Dick, the Avenger, at Golden Gulch." It was upon this Dick, an individual who had passed a very active life in sustaining wrongs and wreaking retributions, that Smith had modelled his notions of conduct. In the present instance, having been socially and educationally degraded, he had constituted himself as, "Smithy, the Avenger, at the Public School."

six jelly-sandwiches, the Avenging Angel, when sentenced to expend his own ten cents in restitution, shortly reappeared, to the loud chagrin of that sweet-toothed epicure, with two stale loaves of baker's bread.

In despair, Miss Coyne tried contest-gardens. She offered Smith an abandoned plot on the reservation and spent a quarter of an hour after school, one day, in describing the fascinations of flower culture. When pressed as to his



She read the scandalous document

For, despite Miss Coyne's best efforts, not a day dawned upon the third grade but that some luckless wight did penance for the wrongs of Smithy Hammond. Red anarchy knows neither race nor sex: the plaint of young Sisco, what time he relinquished the hot cent—privately prepared at the neighboring blacksmith's forge—softened our Avenger no more than the hysterics of Elsa Auerbach when raked by toy-cannon grape, or the anguished writhes of Effie Hopper and Ida Maritz upon finding their pigtails inextricably knotted together. Touching the suspicious theft of William Garner's

choice, Smithy slid a forefinger to and fro beneath his nose and finally admitted, "Peas."

An excess of idealism moved Miss Coyne to inquire hopefully, "Do—do you mean sweet peas, Smith?"

"Dunno if they're sweet," mumbled the Avenger with the sickly smirk which usually masked dissimulation. "I just mean those little, round, hard ones."

"Have I won him at last?" mused Miss Coyne, the next day, noting the gratified glance wherewith he pocketed his paper of dried peas. Idle vision! Within fifteen minutes every member of

the third grade was smarting in some vulnerable spot, while Dominic rushed upstairs, a wet handkerchief pressed to one orb, shrieking, "Mia eye! Mia eye is gone! He has a tin thing, and he blows, and mia eye stings out!"

After due punishment and exhortation, Smithy promised to devote the balance of his ammunition to its legitimate end. Miss Coyne escorted him to the reservation and turned the first spadeful of earth, herself, while he stood by, murmuring subdued, "Yes'ms" and "No m'ms." But once she had gone, the Avenger flung his spade at a snickering onlooker, executed a war-dance upon the newly sown plot, and branded all amateur cultivators with the generic term, "Old women."

"Dimmit!" he cried, "d'ye think I'm a gardner? Good enough fun for kids and little girls, maybe, but not for me, dimmit!"

His thorough contempt for the business was clearly shown, one afternoon, when a dozen little girls ran up to Miss Coyne, shrieking in horrified chorus:

"Miss Coyne, Smithy Hammond wont let us get any water for our gardens!"

"Wont let you!" she demanded. "How can he stop you?"

"Well, he just does," came the scandalized protest, "'cause—'cause, you see, he's swimmin' in the brook."

And so Miss Coyne urged him no further in contest-gardening; but sometimes, as she strolled through the reservation, dispensing encouragement and advice, she would pause to shake her head over a certain square wilderness of weeds, and soliloquize, "Poor Smithy! I'm afraid his little garden will never bring forth anything but sand and thorn!"

And then she fell to musing on Eva, the meek, who with her lean heritage of earth had aspired to bring forth roses. Eva had been absent all that eventful week to bear the burden of her sickly, widowed mother.

"I declare," quoth Miss Coyne with a flash of presentiment, "if Smithy Hammond does one single thing to that poor, little Eva May, I'll send him home with the recommendation for a thrashing!"

But who shall forecast between any twain or suspect the vulnerable spot in Achilles' heel? At quarter of nine, the next Monday morning, Smithy was dashing around the schoolhouse, in his hand a water squirt charged to the muzzle, leaving havoc and consternation in his trail. Calumnies had undone him and boarding-school loomed imminent. Ha! So much the better! Welcome, then, escape from a tyrannical father, and meanwhile, death, chill, drippy death to these white-livered tattlers whom, not for the sake of one true soul found thereamong, would he—

Then, leaping from ambush, he encountered a strange vision, dazzlingly pale, of blond braids and blue eyes, pitifully upturned.

The Avenger's weapon wavered and fell; he was unnerved, disarmed.

"Gosh!" he said at length. "What's your name?"

She held her slate at half-guard, murmuring timidly, "Eva May."

"I wont hurt you. Honest! See here!" He discharged his squirt at the path with tremendous effect. "Where do you live?" pursued the young heir of Hammond's Woods.

"In Cooper's Flats."

Her frock was ragged and mean, like that of the beggar-maid whom King Cophetua wooed.

Already the blue eyes acknowledged his mastery. Overhead the school-bell tolled their parting. A moment he studied her face, revolving those tricks and wiles whereby young love magics its reluctant mate; then he said with slurred emotion, "I'll show you my burning-glass at recess."

And there was brought to pass in the fifteen minute interval that which Miss Coyne had failed to accomplish by a week of patience and kindness. The Avenger's wrongs slumbered and the third grade pupils walked in peace, save, perhaps, for a random trip or buffet—the festive splintering of a lance, as it were, in tribute to fair ladies' eyes.

At first Eva fled with bashful terror from the homage of this young patrician bravo; but time brought trust, and the day dawned when she ventured to share

in public view the shelter of his umbrella. To strengthen the bond came such intimacies as their secret visits at noon-tide to the baker's, where a common taste in buns was disclosed; and, later, excursions beyond the lodge-gates of Hammond's Woods, amid whose ferny covert Smith revealed certain natural lairs screened with bracken and stocked with apples, wherein a man at bay with the world might live unfound for months.

Why did not dryad or guardian-sprite peer through the leaves to forewarn them of woman's treachery? For Smith's indifference to the fair sex was yet his bane in this: that the foolish creatures—who perversely love those that ill-use them—hid beneath their concerted disgust a secret admiration for him whom they styled "horrid" in open conclave. And who was this white-faced Eva May that she should

thus brazenly defy their official boycott? Nor were rumors lacking that her garden received unlawful succor, there having been found on her person a diagram of proposed irrigation labeled in bold, masculine hand, "Guess it needs more water."

For now was every hand laid unto the tool and nerve strained for the event, but ten days distant. The air was quick with whispers of contending hopes and fears and of hypothetical possessions based on prize-money. Elsa only tossed her head and smiled in proud self-confidence. On the other hand, Eva had never aspired to prize-winning; she had dreamed merely of roses, great, rich, red creatures smiling on glossy stems, such roses as those which came to life and played with the lonely, little princess in the fairy-tale. But now that, despite all loving pains, her bush still remained the same ugly dwarf, unresponsive to anything less than sheer magic transformation, she sought to choke disappointment by dreaming afresh in her own little mercenary way of what she would do with the money, had she won it.

This second dream, confided for reality's sake to a loose leaf in her composition-book, also had its rude awakening; for the leaf fluttered out and was found by Elsa, who read therein an account of gifts dedicated to Smithy Hammond, headed by the damning phrase, "What I would do with it."

"She thinks she's going to get that



"You must get rid of those insects, Eva."

prize, don't she?" Eva heard next day.

It was Elsa, ensconced behind the cloakroom door and surrounded by a group of gaping South-Siders to whom she proceeded to read the scandalous document. Eva tiptoed away, seeking to hide shame beneath feigned ignorance. But many-tongued rumor stripped off the mask, leaving her to face a heartless, jeering world; and when she stole forth at noon, a full ten minutes after the multitude had dispersed, her homeward path proved a veritable fiery ordeal over which she fled with scorching feet. For the enemy was abroad, and every flagstone unto the Hudson Avenue curb flaunted its chalked hieroglyph of hearts, arrows, initials intertwined, with here and there the brutal couplet:

*Eva May loves Smithy Hammond.
Smithy Hammond loves Eva May.*

Before such horrid charges mere womankind weeps, shrinks into corners, falters guilty disavowals, and thus did Eva. But Smith was made of sterner stuff. Like young Romeo he awoke to find himself sunk into a mere carpet-knight, a silken, curled gallant, the target of jests and gibes from those who, but yesterday, had cringed to meet him. The Avenger's blood was up; he brooded on renunciation, cold and cruel.

That afternoon he crept across to the reservation, smirking black malevolence. The derisive cheer which greeted his distant approach died ominously as he vaulted the fence and dashed into the enemy's midst. His fists were clinched, his white teeth horribly agrin; the berserker fit was upon him. Deaf to the rallying-cry for concerted action, he pounced upon Elsa Auerbach and, alas, forsaken Eva, and dragged his shrieking victims to the brook. A moment's heroic struggle and they floundered shoulder-deep among the lily pads while he chanted in hoarse *falso*:

"Dimmit! I guess that'll fix you two, dimmit! D'ye think I want any of your presents? And I guess you wont write on the sidewalks again in a hurry, Dutchy! Come on, and I'll throw the whole lot of you in, you public school Micks! Dimmit, dimmit!"

With which, he tramped off across a row of flower-beds, clogged a triumphant measure upon Eva's rosebush, raised ten outstretched fingers to his nose, and vanished.

Late that night, having drowned an apprehensive interim beneath the tent of a traveling-circus, Smith crept homeward and gained his room *via* the overhanging branch of a tree. Betrayed by the cook, an embittered creature, who still remembered the usage of her pots for target-practice, a full week agone, Smith was conducted down-stairs to the library in his all-too meagre attire. Evidently traducement had forerun him. He was pinned to a circumstantial confession of crime—a refined torture when one's father knows the things before hand and stands ready to correct or contradict every detail. But acknowledgement and contrition availed naught: the Avenger flung himself down, that night, snarling and biting the bedclothes, and he fell asleep while cutting on an imaginary rifle-stock a notch for every stripe that had been inflicted upon his outraged frame.

Next morning he overheard his father tell Mrs. Hammond:

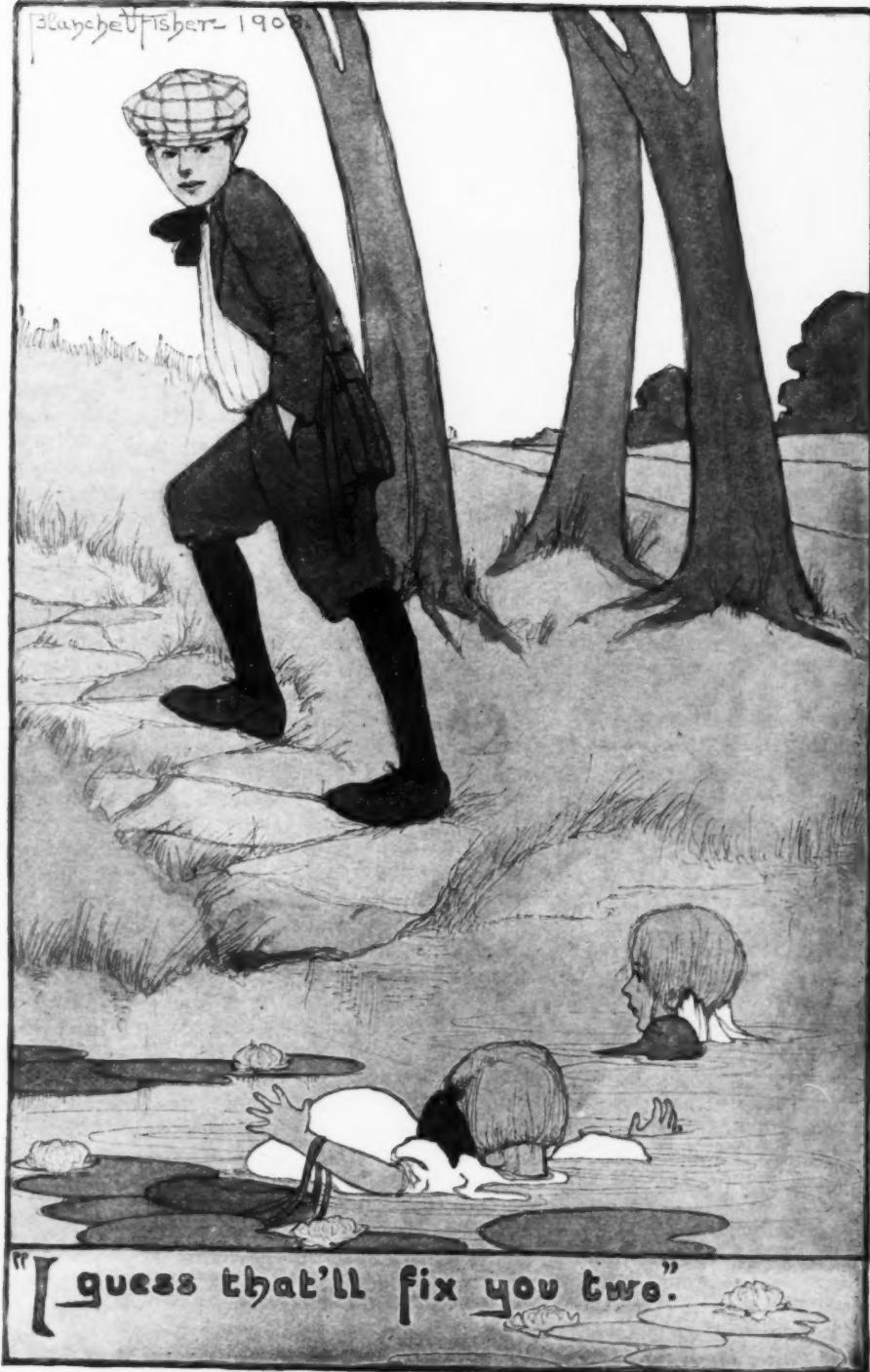
"It's unfortunate we should have to be away for a week, just now. However, I've told Eliza—" and at the vast authority which had been conferred upon a mere domestic, the listener's blood boiled afresh. An hour later he was driven schoolward between his father and mother. At parting the latter tearfully entreated him to good works; his father merely said,

"Young man, you give this letter to Miss Coyne, and don't try any tricks or it will be the worse for you when I return."

But no sooner had Thomas whipped onward for the train than Smithy crept up a quiet side-street where, to the dismal toll of the three-quarters bell, he possessed himself of the enemy's dispatches. They comprised the writer's deep regrets, his assurance of co-operation, and—Smith started and swore softly—orders that his son should tender both victims a full apology.

Long since had the nine o'clock bell

Blanche Fisher 1903



ceased its hoarse clang, but still Smith hung over the little bridge and spat moodily into the stream. Apologize he would not. What, off-cap with sorry grimace unto mere girls, in the full eye of Micks, low—common? Bah, his stomach could go no further!

Presently there approached with laggard, uneasy step Samuel Boyd, in tardiness a confirmed offender, and now caught between Scylla and Charybdis; for Miss Coyne had threatened to send him to the superintendent on the next offense, while upon the other hand stood "Fatty" Flynn, truant-officer, who did not scruple to hale forth the offender, so averred Samuel, from the very bosom of his family.

"Dimmit!" quoth the Avenger, "I'd like to see him catch me! I'd—"

Replying with a swift prod of elbow, Master Boyd dropped into shoal water and hugged the beetling bank. Smith followed, not an instant too soon; for who should wheel past, just then, with studious glances to right and left of his handle-bar, but the redoubtable Flynn. As his burly figure disappeared around the corner, "Come on!" cried Smith, and up and off they shot, with an invisible clutch at their backs, through the town and across the fields. When at last they lay down behind a fence and listened, home seemed miles away. At ease they caught their breath and ate raw turnips.

"Think he seen us?" gasped Sammy, his mouth full.

"S'posen he did?" sneered Smith, fully aware he had not. "Gee, aint turnips slick? Let's light a fire!"

They were discussing a brace of roasted carrots when down the road there came a heavy rumble with the crack of whips. A flash of red rounded the curve.

"The circus!" cried Smithy, and over the fence they leaped.

It was no longer the thing of last night, all wonder and a wild desire, but a jaded, faded caravansary of animal-cages, little ponies, and sleepily jolting drivers; yet the sight breathed of freedom and wandering, lawless life.

"Bet you dassn't join," whispered Smith with insidious deviltry, whereto Master Boyd, afraid to return home

alone, readily answered "If you will, I will."

So on they went.

After a mile of dusty trudging they sued successfully for a ride. Seated on each side of a good-natured driver, they learned his destination, an adjoining town, whereto the balance of the troupe had repaired by train. The truants gaped. That the clown, the beautiful bareback rider, and all their jolly company should prefer the humdrum railroad-car was almost incredible.

By noon, when the cavalcade paused for an hour of rest and refreshment, Master Boyd was wearing a wan, preoccupied air; and later on, when the shadows had begun to lengthen, he murmured restively, "Say, Smit', let's—let's git out and walk awhile."

When Smith returned he was alone, and to him the driver said:

"Now, young feller, s'posen you skip along, too. No kidnaping for me!"

Smith did not argue the point; he fell back and followed distantly till dusk. Then he approached, climbed under the flap of the rear wagon, and dropped inside. There, burrowed deep in a nest of carpet and canvas, he watched the night deepen and the moon rise; felt the on-creep of slumber and, glittering above it, the sole, steadfast star of revenge.

Deserted! Well, who cared? Boyd was only a Mick, anyway. As for girls—faugh, he would abjure the whole crew! There would be lamentations when, he returned, some day, a clown, a ringmaster, a Dick the Avenger! For the third grade, a cool six-shooter; for Elsa, the lasso and slow torture; for Miss Coyne . . . Oh, but this was a circus-wagon, not a prairie-schooner! . . . Funny, the clown preferring a train! And the bareback lady, her cheeks like roses. . . . That rosebush was no good, anyway. Well, he'd got even with those girls! When he came back, Eva'd be grown-up, beautiful, afraid, too. But he wouldn't hurt her if she was polite to him; perhaps he'd lift her on his horse. . . . white circus-horse . . . broncho. . . . And they'd ride . . . ride . . .

But for Eva the future held nothing.

Day after day she lay abed, supped full of misfortune and cough-medicine, staring forth on blankness. Sammy Boyd called to tell her of Smith's dramatic exit, of Eliza's anguished appeal to the school-board, and Flynn's fruitless search. Ida Maritz called to rehearse the latest garden-lore together with Elsa's insufferable assurance of triumph. But Eva paid small heed; her faith in mankind and her interest in gardens had been crushed, downtrodden like the hapless rosebush, whereof the deceiver had said, "Needs more water." Cruel transposition! For was it not Eva who had been cast into the brook and her rosebush trampled in the dust?

And now, like a mockery, water came; the drought was broken and, for three days and nights, rain drenched the earth. Miss Coyne, abroad one evening for fresh air's sake, walked down Hammond's Drive and out again.

"Poor Smithy!" said she, breasting a certain plot, "Sand and thorns!"

As she regained Hudson Avenue a small shape sprang up from the underbrush, darted off, and vanished in the drizzling distance. For an instant she thought she knew the figure and its manner of flight; then she recalled Sisco's tale of watermelon thieves and dismissed her impression as pure fancy. But whatever the vision may have suggested, it is certain that she murmured more than once on her way home, "Sand and thorns! Sand and thorns!"

And Eva, too, had her fleeting glimpse of vanished things. For, falling asleep to the dull rain-drench, she dreamed that she was running panic-stricken through the storm with Smithy Hammond after her. She gained the reservation and dodged around and around her plot, begging him not to cross it. But as he

crouched, ready to spring, there came a rustle, a faint quiver from the dead rosebush at her feet; it stirred, stretching forth arms like an awakened sleeper; up, up it shot between them, a marvel of tender green. And now the green flushed with pink, tiny buds that swelled and deepened into great blooms of royal red.



Eva, of a sudden stopped and stared

With a cry, Eva stooped to clasp it, and then—

"Take some more medicine, Evie," mumbled her mother, half asleep. "Goodness how you do sniffle!"

Next morning Eva arose and trudged her dolorous way unto Hammond's Woods, for to-day was the Day, and an

hour's preparation was available before Miss Coyne arrived in judgment. The reservation was a very beehive of bustle, and on every hand acclaims of Nature's husbandry shook the air. For, besides a tropical creation of weeds, Ida's faded lettuce had turned a brilliant green, Sammy Boyd's carrots had sprouted into lank maturity, Mamie Whelan's prize-cucumber had gained an inch in girth, while Dominic, whose imagination was easily inflamed, shouted sensationally, "I plant six eggplants; comes rain, and now is seven!"

But the greatest miracle was yet behind. For Eva, strolling sadly towards her abandoned plot, of a sudden stopped and stared; her knees broke beneath her, she sank to earth and clutched the grass. And when the children flocked forward, an amazed, incredulous chorus, they saw no longer a wizened shrub but a tall, graceful thing of glossy leaves and rich blooms, the lovely changeling of the rain-soaked earth; while Eva still knelt there with silent, upturned face, like some rapt heathen who beholds his ugly idol transfigured in true radiance and glory.

But an hour later in the class-room, when Miss Coyne sat in judgment, she found her verdict hampered by unwelcome facts; for she remembered the vision of three nights before, and also that during her subsequent call on Mrs. Hammond, a servant had reported the sudden, bodily disappearance of a rose-bush. Therefore the conscientious Miss Coyne arose to deliver her report on gardens with a troubled spirit, inwardly bracing herself for a cold, impassionate decision in favor of Tigris-lilies.

The list opened with "Freeman Greenberg; no exhibit." But Freeman smiled content, for weeks ago he had sold his beans at market-price, invested the proceeds in baseball-goods, and retired with \$5.12 profit. Then followed, "Ulysses Sisco; watermelon vines, no fruit;" whereat a gray pallor usurped the cheek of that convalescent who, fearful of thieves, had devoured his whole brood, pelican-like, at one fell swoop.

As the list drew to a close amid suspended breath, up the stairs there came

sounds of a scuffle and contending tongues; then in strode Flynn, the victorious, with a small, struggling object in his grip.

"Here y're, Miss Coyne," he announced. "Hidin' over be the woods, he was, livin' in a rig'ler ca-avern. Be still!"

The Avenger, hatless and collarless, mud-spattered and briar-torn, with shoes unlaced and stockings down, presented a sorry sight; yet were his shoulders humped and his fists clenched, while his black, beady eyes roved with the fierce defiance of one who cares not what he does to spite the world.

"Take him to the lavatory," commanded Miss Coyne, and thither she, herself, followed.

When they returned, his freshly scrubbed face was not without suspicious streaks, while she was quite silent and preoccupied. As if nothing had happened, she resumed her report, concluding with, "Smith Hammond; no exhibit," then she took breath and said with the slightest tremor of voice:

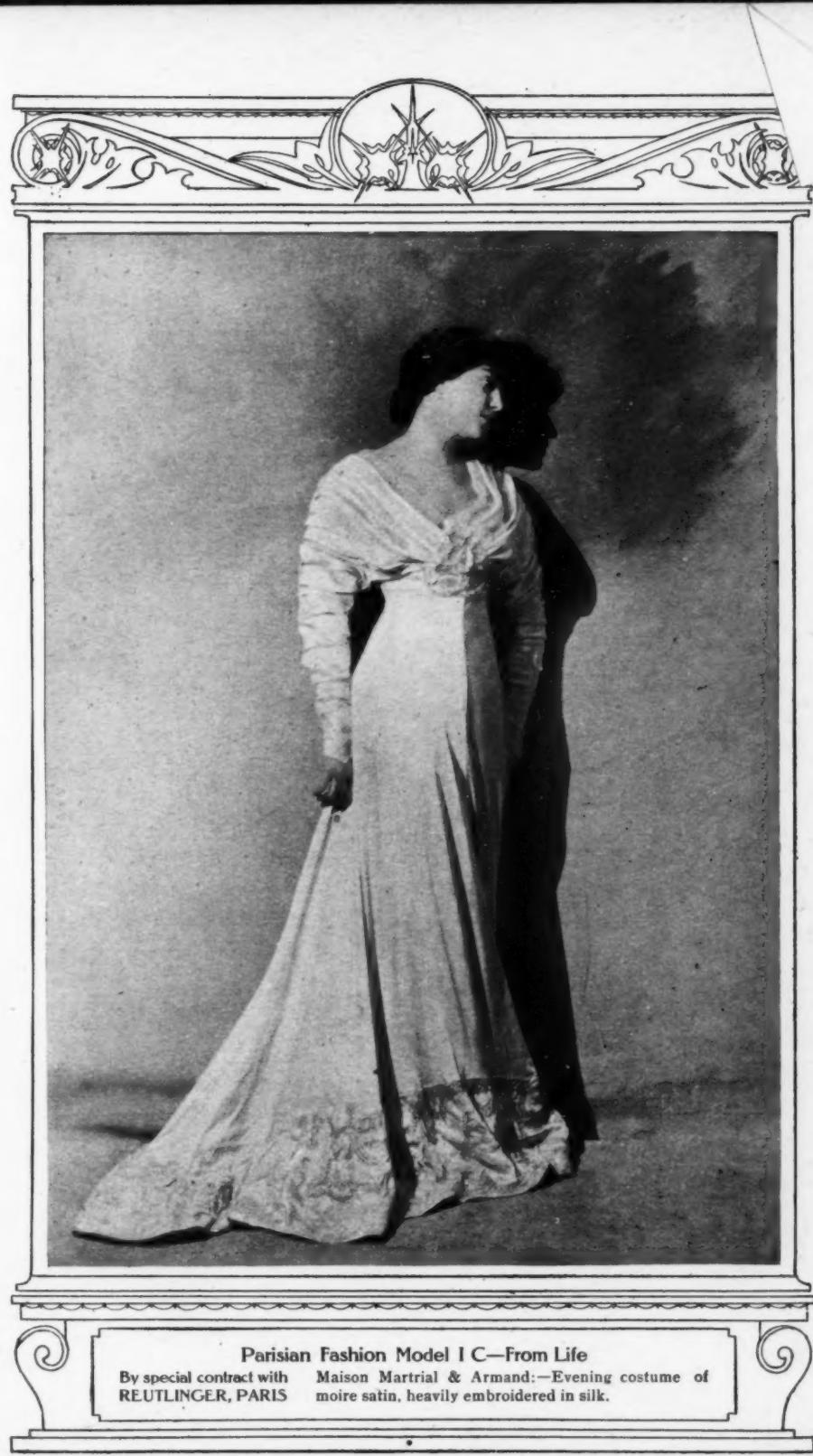
"I award the prize to Eva May whose garden, all things considered, has brought forth the fullest results!"

Nor was her hope misplaced: for at recess, after Smith had been properly wept over by his mother, and Miss Coyne had interceded with his father, and all had retired satisfied, there came a small knock at the door, and the Avenger entered.

"Miss Coyne," he mumbled, "I wont be good for anybody else, but," with a stealthy glance around the room, "I'll be good for you!"

Then he fled down-stairs and burst forth on the playground with an Apache yell. Nearby stood Eva, towards whom he edged sheepishly, but she gave him an indignant glance and flashed her back. For an instant the Avenger towered: he would wreck this proud impostor, shatter her fond miracle of the rosebush! Then came the memory of Miss Coyne's fingers resting upon his hair. He turned away, drew forth a cigaret-butt, and resorted to man's solace.

"Dimmit!" he murmured, "what do I care? Girls are no good, anyway, dimmit!"



Parisian Fashion Model I C—From Life

By special contract with
REUTLINGER, PARIS

Maison Martrial & Armand:—Evening costume of
moire satin, heavily embroidered in silk.



Parisian Fashion Model II C—From Life

By special contract with
REUTLINGER, PARIS

Maison Laferrier:—Afternoon costume of ecru satin;
the corsage is of tulle and the belt of gold.



Parisian Fashion Model III C—From Life

By special contract with
REUTLINGER, PARIS

Maison Bernard:—Costume of checked champagne
mousseline trimmed with figured ribbon edged with
green.



Parisian Fashion Model IV C—From Life

By special contract with
REUTLINGER, PARIS

Maison Bernard:—Afternoon Costume of old blue
grenadine finished with satin band of the same color.



Parisian Fashion Model V C—From Life

By special contract with **Maison Drécoll**:—Dinner costume of old rose satin;
REUTLINGER, PARIS corsage of tulle embroidered in gold.



Parisian Fashion Model VI C—From Life

By special contract with
REUTLINGER, PARIS

Maison Drécoll:—Tailored costume of gray and black
check; the collar is of black velvet and the tie of green
taffeta.



Parisian Fashion Model VII C—From Life

By special contract with **Maison Bernard**;—Costume of chamois-cloth: corsage of tulle and lace, embroidered with silver.

REUTLINGER, PARIS



Parisián Fashion Model VIII C—From Life

By special contract with
REUTLINGER, PARIS

Maison Drécoll:—Afternoon costume of white voile
and soutache.



SOME DRAMAS OF THE DAY

by Louis V. De Foe

It is characteristic of this most erratic of dramatic seasons that the lightning of success should strike in new places. Out of a clear sky it has just flashed again. It has placed the brand of the elect upon Mr. Eugene Walter who, hitherto, has been traveling unknown and in the dark. His new comedy, "Paid in Full," in its own right is a fine, significant play. It is the talk of New York, at least among people who do not waste words over trivial matters, and it has been quick to place its young author in the small company who are doing really substantial things for native dramatic art.

In fact, I do not hesitate to put "Paid in Full" in the front rank of this year's best achievements on the stage. I shall be greatly surprised, when the season's roll of honor is called, if it will not have won, by common consent, an admiration and popularity which will stand it shoulder to shoulder with those other two unique and interesting dramas, Mr. Augustus Thomas' "The Witching Hour" and Mr. Henri Bernstein's "The Thief." This is aristocratic society—the blue blood of 1907-8, I know—but I can discover no reason why "Paid in Full" should not be deemed eligible.

This absorbing play, acted by only six

essential characters—Ibsen himself could not have cut a theme more closely to the bone—opens one's eyes to the fact that there is throbbing, vibrating drama even in the every-day lives of ordinary men and women, if only a way be found to cleave down vital issues. Sardou never spoke more truly than when he said that there were plots for twenty plays in every edition of a daily newspaper.

Joseph Brooks, his wife, and their friends, in "Paid In Full," are of this ordinary, every-day sort. The reason they appeal so intensely is that, in their strength and their weakness, they are so recognizably human, and the story of their adventures so adroitly bares all the quivering nerves of their beings.

Brooks is one of New York's countless small-wage dwellers in a humble flat. He is a contemptible example of overweening selfishness for, while he is married to a noble young wife, who patiently makes the best of her lot, he is a petulant, mean-spirited coward, who charges up to sociological conditions the circumstances standing in the way of his advancement. His irritability, once roused, spares nothing in its path.

He is a clerk in the steamship-offices of *Captain Williams*, a rough but pros-

perous product of a hard and suspicious career as a sea-captain in a questionable South Pacific trade. This *Williams*, a great, hulking fellow of forbidding speech and manners, does not like his clerk, and refuses to advance him although, for the sake of *Mrs. Brooks*, whose fine qualities he admires, he continues to keep him in his employment.

Treasuring an uncalled for insult suffered at *Brooks'* hands, *Captain Williams* goes away, leaving an opportunity open for his clerk to steal. *Brooks*, however, has already embarked in a small way on this criminal course. Irritated at the well-meant invitation of *Jimsey Smith*, a good, gentle and loyal friend of his wife, to join a theatre-party, he yields to temptation and takes the price of the theatre-tickets from the steamship company's collections.

Here, then, are the preliminaries to the main story, told in a first act: a perfect picture of the life it represents and remarkable for its simple, terse, direct constructive-skill.

Brooks' thieving operations continue, of course, and the next act finds him living in a comfortable hotel-apartment. His wife believes his salary has been advanced, and she is radiant and happy in the enjoyment of her husband's improved fortunes. But the coils are tightening fast around the guilty clerk. *Jimsey*, patiently awaiting a chance to serve the wife, knows that *Brooks* is a thief. *Captain Williams*, back from his trip, has already found the deficit of \$16,000.

A warning from *Jimsey* to *Brooks* of the calamity which threatens, uncovers every contemptible trait in the husband's craven nature. In a paroxysm of fear, after confessing that he is both a liar and a thief, he turns upon his wife and upbraids her as the cause of his downfall. Then, in his terror, he makes to her the proposition of a cur. He hysterically begs that she go to *Captain Williams'* rooms late at night and intercede for him.

"You know how far you can go without compromising yourself; every woman knows that," he proposes, and the curtain falls as the disgusted, horrified wife hears her husband make the appointment at the telephone.

When it rises again the scene is the gruff old sea-dog's strange, dimly lighted den, decorated with picturesque souvenirs of his nautical life. *Captain Williams* is notified of the coming of his visitor and clears his decks for action. But somewhere in his rough, unwieldy body burns the flame of fine manhood.

"Women are divided into just two classes—the kind that can't be bad and the kind that can't be good," he muses.

But he has previously formed his opinion of *Mrs. Brooks*, and he does not hesitate to put her to the test.

It is a capital situation, developed with the resources of a veteran dramatist and altogether remarkable for one of Mr. Walters' limited experience. Unexpectedly, *Jimsey* arrives first, and the colloquy which follows carries a wonderful thrill. This noble friend, whom *Mrs. Brooks* has once refused to marry, has suspected the meeting.

"I've known her," he says, "since she was in short frocks. She has always looked up in my face and smiled. When I come back, if she's not able to look up in my face and smile, I'm coming to see you, *Williams*, and I'm coming heeled."

"What particular kind of heel do you wear, *Smith*?" the captain asks amusedly.

"If you should ask the man that makes 'em," grimly retorts *Jimsey*, "he'll tell you the name is Colt and the size is forty-four."

"And he'd do it, too, if he thought he ought to," muses the captain, after his guest has departed.

Now comes the wife of the thief, nervously herself for her ordeal.

For a time the captain pretends to entertain her with rough jocularity and rambling anecdotes of his adventures. Then he makes the expected insinuation. In an instant the torrents of *Emma Brooks'* outraged sense of virtue are let loose, and she hysterically voices her contempt in terms which leave no doubt of her innate goodness.

The satisfaction of *Williams* at her attack is the exultation of a man who has found that his estimate of human nature has been correct.

"I knew it," he exclaims, slapping his big knee; "I knew I couldn't be wrong!"



Frank Sheridan as Captain Williams, Miss Lillian Albertson as Emma Brooks, Miss Hattie Russell as Mrs. Harris, Miss Oiga Waldrop as Beth Harris, Tully Marshall as Joseph Brooks and Ben Johnson as James Smith in "Paid in Full," a new drama by Eugene Walter. Photograph by White, N. Y.

He hands to the wife the paper which insures her husband's immunity from arrest while *Jimsey* re-enters and, met by the wife's innocent smile, empties the cartridges from his pistol on the captain's table with the grim remark:

"I guess I'll leave the pegs of that heel as souvenirs of the occasion."

What remains of the play after the climax is briefly told. *Emma Brooks* returns to her home to be received with a coward's exultation at his sense of safety. But the last bitter weight is added to her burden when he insolently demands that she confess the incidents of her visit. She scorns his insinuation and turns from him forever, leaving the brute to go to the dogs with whom he belongs. The audience departs with the intuitive knowledge that some day her fine womanhood will get the faithful *Jimsey* as its reward.

There are side-lights to this remarkably effective drama which have not been told. But I hope it has been described sufficiently to bring my readers to its spell, if the opportunity is afforded them. If they see it at the Astor Theatre in New York, they will find actors in the rôles who could not easily be excelled. They will take keen delight in Mr. Frank Sheridan as *Captain Williams* and Mr. Ben Johnson as the lovable *Jimsey*, and they will vote that Mr. Tully Marshall discharges with remarkable fidelity his unpleasant duty of acting the husband. They may agree that Miss Lillian Albertson does not quite rise to all the possibilities of the rôle of the wife, especially in the scene in the captain's den, but they will admire her performance, nevertheless.

And none will find a flaw in the staging of the play, which is accomplished with a fidelity that lifts it out of the realm of the make-believe and gives it the atmosphere of actual things.



MR. OTIS SKINNER has so far succeeded in his attempt to revive the chivalric glories of romantic comedy that with "The Honor Of The Family," he has beaten down the barriers which, heretofore, have been set up against him in New York, and has securely en-

trenched himself in one of its leading theatres for the rest of the season.

Although Balzac is not read nowadays with anything like the interest that once attached to his works, *Un Ménage de Garçon* will easily be recognized as the groundwork on which Mr. Paul M. Potter has builded Mr. Skinner's new play.

The play takes up Balzac's story at the point where *Col. Philippe Bridau*, relieved from his service under the standard of Napoleon by the latter's capture and exile, hears that his miserly old uncle, *Jean Rouget*, has fallen under the influence of a plotting adventuress, *Flora Brazier*, and her lover, *Max Gilet*. More in the spirit of venality than out of love for his family's honor, *Bridau* sets out on a campaign of rescue. After many exciting adventures and hair-breadth escapes he succeeds in putting the enemy to flight, reclaiming the old man, and turning his beautiful but unscrupulous paramour out of doors. In the course of this expedition he shoots and kills *Flora's* lover, *Max*, in a duel, but afterwards, in *Flora*, herself, encounters an even more dangerous antagonist. She tries to lure him from his purpose by her woman's wiles but, being well experienced in the ways of the world, he resists her blandishments and defeats her purposes.

This *Bridau* of the stage is a French *Petruchio* with just a tincture of *Macaire*. Mr. Skinner "makes him up" with a fierce mustache, prodigious beaver hat, rakish, high-collared military coat, and great cavalry boots, and crams him with heroics and sardonic humor. The actor's crisp, incisive elocution and easy swagger complete the picture and produce a wonderfully entertaining effect.

As in the case of most dramatized novels, the interest of "The Honor Of The Family" centers closely around the star. Opportunities for good acting are not denied, however, to Miss Percy Haswell as *Flora*, A. G. Andrews as old *Rouget*, Francis Carlyle as *Max Gilet*, and two or three others who manage to make their small parts stand out conspicuously.



IWOULD not be inclined to pay much attention to the dramatization of Dostoeffski's intensely morbid but powerful



OTIS SKINNER
As Lieut.-Col. Philippe Bridau in "The Honor of
the Family."

novel, "Crime and Punishment," which Mr. Laurence Irving has made for Mr. Edward H. Sothern under the title, "The Fool Hath Said There Is No God," except that it has been hailed elsewhere as a great play, which it certainly is not, and that the actor is said to have increased his artistic stature by his impersonation of *Rodion Raskolnikoff*, which is a ridiculous manifestation of kindly but indiscriminate criticism.

It will be remembered that the growing interest of the tale revolves around the insane act of an abnormal, physically frail, and mentally erratic Russian stu-

dent, who is obsessed with a theory that murder is justifiable when committed to eliminate undesirable members of society. This crack-brained hobby he puts to the test when he eliminates, with an ax, a brutal tenement-house manager to save *Sonia Martinova*, a young, deeply religious girl, from his immoral advances.

As *Rodion*, despite his vagaries, is intellectual—a materialist and an atheist—Dostoeffski's novel resolves itself into a conflict between his unbelief and *Sonia's* implicit, Christian faith. The latter is triumphant in the end, *Rodion* confessing his crime and becoming con-

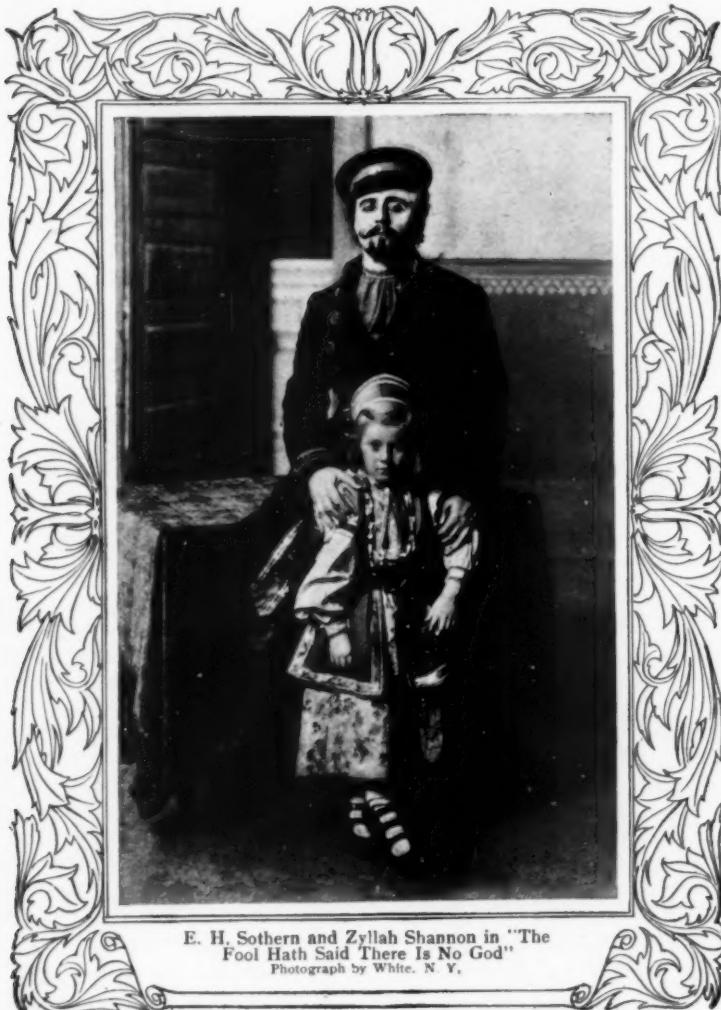
verted, so the narrative is invested with a certain redeeming uplift. But Mr. Irving, discarding these finer interests, turns his play, after the first act, into a detective melodrama, and finally utterly emasculates his hero by dragging in a conventional happy ending. The result is, that most of the story's conviction and interest evaporate.

Mr. Sothern is too experienced to act any character badly. His *Rodion* has a number of strong moments, particularly in the first and fourth acts. The same cannot be said of his company, which manages to strip the play of its Slav atmosphere and reduces the scene intended to be most impressive into something not very distant from farce.

THE merry farce, "Father And The Boys," is a mighty tug by Mr. George Ade at his own bootstraps. It has lifted him out of the class of "The Bad Samaritan" and "Artie" and landed him once again within hailing distance of "The County Chairman" and "The College Widow."

The new play also furnishes a happy change of fortune for the dryly amusing Mr. William H. Crane. The character of old *Lemuel Morewood*, which he plays with much of the unction of his famous part in "The Private Secretary," almost effaces memories of his tragic—and tragically bad—impersonations in "Business Is Business" and "The Price of Money."

Lemuel Morewood, be it known, is an



E. H. Sothern and Zyllah Shannon in "The Fool Hath Said There Is No God"
Photograph by White, N. Y.



William H. Crane and Miss Margaret Dale in "Father and the Boys."
Photograph by Hall, N. Y.

elderly, well-meaning but moss-grown wool-broker, who transforms himself into a "six-cylinder kid," developing amazing sportive proclivities in an attempt to bring his two sons to a realization of the seriousness of life. Having subjected himself to a course of early privation, he sees the socially ambitious *William* and the athletically mad *Thomas* frittering away the proceeds of his industry and bringing to ruin the business in which he has set them up as partners.

At home he is even less master of his own affairs. His house is over-run with people whom he detests, and he is kept so busy signing checks that he no longer has time even for the enjoyment of his nocturnal red apple and game of checkers. At last it dawns upon him that there is truth in his sons' often repeated taunt that "he has dropped seven miles behind the procession."

The remainder of the farce tells, in Mr. Ade's breeziest vein, how *Lemuel*, developing an eighty horse-power speed,

catches up, passes the flag, and forges so recklessly ahead of the band that his idle sons are seized with dismay lest the Morewood fortunes be wrecked in the ditch. Not one of your transformed fancies of conventional farce is this sexagenarian thoroughbred. Everything, from parlor-roulette to the race-track, comes his way. Money fairly pours into his pockets.

The winning strategic move is made when the much animated old man suddenly heads for the West with a vaudeville-singer, to rescue her Goldfield mine from one of the polite sharks in *William's* retinue. It is only a fatherly interest he has taken in the girl, but the boys do not know it. They start in pursuit, thoroughly sobered and tamed. When the final transaction takes place at the hotel in Goldfield, they admit they are quite ready to turn back to New York and settle down to business and matrimony.

The farce, like *Lemuel's* head, is not without its bald spots. Now and then its hinges creak and sometimes its humor

becomes a trifle strained, but for the most part it is quite diverting.

Mr. Crane is himself again—which is saying quite enough for his acting. A real surprise in the company is the breezy, efficient performance of the vaudeville-singer by Miss Margaret Dale. "The boys," played by Mr. Forrest Orr and Mr. Robert MacKay, might be improved, but they are not a serious blemish to the play.



ADDITIONS to the list of musical comedies have not been numerous in recent weeks. "The Merry Widow," "A Waltz Dream," and "Miss Hook Of Holland" loom in proportions that discourage the native tune-tinkers. But the Casino, which now counts Mr. Sam Bernard as its bright, particular star, has made its Spring-production. Accordingly, "Nearly A Hero" will rule during the next few months in that roost of glad-some song-birds.

Its *libretto* is another of the hodge-

podges by the prolific Mr. Harry B. Smith. Mr. Reginald De Koven wrote the original score, but he eventually withdrew it, and a composite musical setting was substituted. It has all the colors—and also all the seams—of Joseph's storied coat.

Mr. Bernard, with a few variations, again masquerades in his familiar Dutch character. This time he is a poor tailor behind in his rent, who catches his miserly landlord in an embarrassing liaison and proceeds to blackmail him, successfully at first but to his own ultimate discomfiture.

Miss Ethel Levey sings in a throaty style and dances heavily. The honors among the girls are borne off handily by Miss Ada Lewis, who gives an amusing and consistent caricature of Miss Ethel Barrymore. The only real acting is done by Mr. Robert Peyton Gibbs.

The chorus, of course, is beautifully gowned. If the managers had distributed the cost of the production more equally between reason and raiment, better results might have been obtained.



Group Scene from "NEARLY A HERO." Sam Edwards, SAM BERNARD, Ethel Levey, Ada Lewis and Zelda Sears.

Photograph by Hall, N. Y.